NATION

IAF's Mi-17 choppers to transport NEET papers

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BUSINESS

Investors lose ₹6.31 lakh cr as market slump extends

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SPORTS

India registers historic win over AFG

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SALAR
DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

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People on motorcycles pass by a collapsed structure after an earthquake in General Santos, Philippines on Monday —PTI

7.8 quake kills 32 in Philippines, sets off tsunami

MANILA, 8 JUNE

An offshore magnitude 7.8 earthquake rocked the southern Philippines on Monday, killing at least 32 people, injuring more than 200 others and sending a 1-metre (3-foot) tsunami into nearby coasts.

A few buildings collapsed and key infrastructure sustained quake damage in the city of General Santos, and tsunami damage was reported in at least one coastal village. Smaller waves were measured in Indonesia and Palau and as far away as southern Japan.

The quake also triggered a landslide in Sarangani province in the southern Philippines that killed 13.

"It's a major earthquake," Teresito Bacolcol, the director of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology said, warning people to seek advise before returning to damaged buildings and houses which could collapse due to aftershocks.

Another regional disaster-response official, Ednar Dayanghirang, told The AP that he was able to "hardly stand and keep my balance when the ground shook as I was leaving my house" in the southern port city of Davao. General Santos is a port city of more than 7 lakh people that is a regional hub for the tuna export industry. The Pacific Tsunami Warning Center said the threat of a tsunami largely passed about five hours after the quake. Philippine officials also lifted a tsunami warning by mid-afternoon. —PTI

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GALLANTRY AWARDS

Prez Droupadi Murmu confers Kirti Chakra posthumously on Sepoy Janjal Pravin Prabhakar at Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi on Monday. His mother, who received the award on his behalf, breaks down in tears during the ceremony —PTI

INDIA bloc wants Pradhan out, will write to CJI on SIR

Bloc vows unity, decides to meet every 2 months

NCP(SP)'s Supriya Sule, NC's Omar Abdullah, SP's Akhilesh Yadav, Cong's Rahul Gandhi, Mallikarjun Kharge and Sonia Gandi, with TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee during the INDIA bloc meeting in New Delhi on Monday —PTI

NEW DELHI, 8 JUNE

The Opposition INDIA bloc on Monday resolved to demand the immediate resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over the NEET-CBSE controversy and decided to write to the Chief Justice of India on the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, alleging "vote loot" and manipulation of elections.

The decisions were taken at a meeting of leaders from 22 opposition parties and Independent MP Kapil Sibal at the Constitution Club in New Delhi. The deliberations, which lasted more than two-and-a-half hours, focused on strengthening opposition unity ahead of the next cycle of Assembly elections and the 2029 Lok Sabha polls.

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge accused Pradhan of presiding over the "betrayal" of lakhs of students who appeared for NEET and CBSE examinations.

> **There is no INDIA alliance. It is just a figment of one's imagination** —BJP

The Opposition further agreed to raise people-centric issues, including unemployment, price rise and alleged atrocities against oppressed sections, while seeking an all-party meeting on these concerns and the country's economic situation.

To maintain cohesion, the INDIA bloc decided to meet every two months, with the next gathering scheduled in Hyderabad in August. Leaders also agreed to continue coordination during the upcoming Monsoon Session of Parliament through daily meetings.

The meeting came amid signs of strain within the alliance. CPI(M)'s John Brittas and CPI leader D Raja raised concerns over Congress remarks during the recent Kerala polls, while TMC Chief Mamata Banerjee flagged alleged political retribution in West Bengal.

DMK did not attend the meeting, while the AAP has distanced itself from the alliance. Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray and JMM leader Hemant Soren joined virtually. Senior leaders including Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi, Akhilesh Yadav, Tejashwi Yadav, Omar Abdullah and Mehbooba Mufti attended.

The issue of aligning with Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) also cropped up during the discussions, with Akhilesh and Omar calling for associating with the outfit. —PTI

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West Asia on brink as Iran, Israel trade strikes again

People click photos beside the wreckage of an Iranian missile that landed near the West Bank city of Jericho Monday —PTI

DUBAI, 8 JUNE

Israel and Iran traded fire Monday in their first attacks since the US' ceasefire with Tehran two months ago. Iran said that it had attacked Israel after the Israeli Army targeted Beirut's suburbs a day earlier, to which Tel Aviv responded by bombing Iran, as West Asia appeared to be falling back into a full-scale war.

Hours later, the Iranian military said it was halting offensive operations, but retained the right to deliver a "crushing response" if it or Lebanon was attacked again. The US told Iran there would be no more attacks by Israel if Iran halted its missile strikes, and that Israel has agreed to halt attacks for now, a regional official said. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu also acknowledged a halt, but vowed to respond "with force" if Iran "makes the mistake (of) attacking us" again.

WEST ASIA WAR DAY-101

US President Donald Trump had posted on his Truth Social that: "Israel and Iran must immediately stop shooting."

The extent of the damages in both Iran and Israel was not immediately clear.

Iranian state television reported the sound of explosions in Tehran and other cities, as the country briefly closed its airspace. The semi-official Fars and Mehr news agencies said Israeli strikes hit a petrochemical factory in the city of Mahshahr, without elaborating on the damages. The Israeli military confirmed the strike on the plant, saying it targeted sites that produce materials for ballistic missiles. Israel said it also targeted truck-based missile launchers.

Meanwhile, Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard said it had targeted two military bases in Israel. Tel Aviv did not confirm the damage, but air sirens boomed across the country. —PTI

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India asks its nationals to leave Iran

India advised its citizens in Iran to leave the country using available means of transport. It also asked citizens in Israel to exercise utmost caution, remain vigilant and avoid all non-essential travel. The Indian Embassy advised citizens to strictly follow safety instructions issued by Israeli authorities and remain close to designated shelters. More than 40,000 Indians currently live in Israel. In Iran, around 9,000 Indians, including students, were present when the conflict began on 28 February.

Fire reported on oil tanker with 24 Indians

A fire broke out aboard the Madagascar-flagged oil tanker MT Marivex off the coast of Oman on Monday, amid fresh hostilities between Israel and Iran. The vessel, carrying 24 Indian seafarers, reported the fire at around 1.30 pm IST, according to India's Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways. Empty at the time, the tanker was anchored south of Muscat and located well outside the Strait of Hormuz. Preliminary reports said it issued a distress call after reportedly coming under attack while heading to Duqm. —PTI

WITH 190 WARHEADS, INDIA WIDENS NUKE ARSENAL

NEW DELHI, 8 JUNE

India is believed to have expanded its nuclear arsenal in 2025 and continued development of new types of nuclear delivery systems, according to the latest findings from Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

New Delhi's modernisation programme, the SIPRI Yearbook 2026 released on 8 June, noted, "is increasingly focused on developing long-range weapons capable of reaching targets throughout China, although planning also continues to be focused on India's long-standing rivalry with Pakistan."

It said India and Pakistan integrated cyber operations into active military conflict "for the first time" during the May 2025 crisis. India has also retained its position as the world's fifth-largest military spender after US, China, Russia and Germany at $92.1 billion, and the second-largest importer of major arms during the 2021-25 period.

The five largest recipients were Ukraine, India, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Pakistan.

Of the global inventory of an estimated 12,187 warheads in January 2026, 9,745 were in military stockpiles for potential use.

Meanwhile, Pakistan continued to develop new delivery systems and accumulate fissile material in 2025. —ANI

Eight workers killed at Vizag Steel Plant

A videorab shows flames erupt in Vizag steel plant after molten iron spilt while being moved in a bucket

VISAKHAPATNAM, 8 JUNE

At least eight workers were killed and six others injured after molten iron spilt on them at the Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Ltd (RINL)-run Vizag Steel Plant in Visakhapatnam on Monday.

According to police, the accident occurred when a ladle carrying molten steel malfunctioned while being moved by a crane, causing a large quantity of liquid metal to spill. The molten iron, estimated to be at around 1,600 degrees Celsius, triggered a fire and trapped workers nearby.

The explosion caused panic across the facility, with workers scrambling for safety as steel plant personnel launched rescue operations. Police said several of the injured suffered grievous burns.

The deceased permanent employees were identified as Gonthina Bhanu Kumar, G.V. Apparao, M Krishna Nagu, K Prabhakar and Gold Kumar. The contract workers killed were Ramana, Trinadh and N Appala Raju. Prime Minister announced an ex gratia of Rs 2 lakh from the PM National Relief Fund for the next of kin of each deceased worker and Rs 50,000 for those injured. —Salar News

Due to sudden winds, ground equipments collided with the planes

DGCA TO PROBE DAMAGE TO 3 AI PLANES AT DELHI AIRPORT

NEW DELHI, 8 JUNE

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) is examining an incident in which three Air India Airbus A320 aircraft were damaged during a severe storm at Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport on Sunday.

The aircraft, parked near Terminal 2, sustained damage at around 4.30 pm when strong winds and heavy rain caused unsecured ground support equipment to break loose and roll across the tarmac.

According to preliminary findings, a passenger step ladder and a trestle belonging to IndiGo and Air India Engineering struck two of the aircraft at multiple locations. A third aircraft was damaged when flying foreign object debris smashed into a right-side sliding window.

All three aircraft have been grounded for inspection and maintenance. No passengers or ground staff were injured, as the aircraft were stationary and unoccupied. —PTI

20 TMC MPs back NDA, write to LS Speaker

KOLKATA, 8 JUNE

TMC plunged deeper into crisis on Monday after 20 Lok Sabha MPs, led by former chief whip Kakoli Ghosh Dastidar, wrote to Speaker Om Birla expressing support for the BJP-led NDA.

The development comes days after 58 of the TMC's 80 MLAs in the West Bengal Assembly defied the party leadership and backed expelled MLA Ritabrata Banerjee as Leader of the Opposition instead of the party's nominee, Sovandeb Chattopadhyay.

The twin revolts have triggered the gravest internal crisis in the party since its formation in 1998, even as Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee was in Delhi attending an INDIA bloc meeting aimed at strengthening opposition unity.

Ghosh Dastidar confirmed that 20 MPs had decided to support the NDA. Dissident MPs are expected to argue before the Speaker that she remains the valid chief whip and that the appointment of Kalyan Banerjee as her replacement did not follow due parliamentary procedure.

TMC countered by releasing a 20 20 letter from Mamata Banerjee informing the Speaker of Kalyan Banerjee's appointment and another letter showing Ghosh Dastidar had resigned from party posts last week.

Sources said the rebel MPs do not plan to resign from the TMC or join the BJP immediately, but instead function as a separate parliamentary bloc while backing the NDA. With the TMC currently holding 28 Lok Sabha seats, support from 20 MPs would cross the two-thirds threshold under the anti-defection law. The turmoil intensified after senior Rajya Sabha MP Sukhendu Sekhar Roy resigned from both the Upper House and the TMC, citing corruption, poor governance and alleged atrocities against women. His exit reduced the party's Rajya Sabha strength to 12 and raised fears that the rebellion could spread beyond the Lok Sabha, opening a new chapter of uncertainty in West Bengal politics.

YUSUF PATHAN BACKS TMC REBELS?

TMC's Mahua Moitra flayed Baharampur MP and ex-cricketer Yusuf Pathan for allegedly siding with the rebels. In a post on X, she questioned his reported visit to Delhi after being called by Amit Shah and urged him to show "courage" and "spine". Pathan was embroiled in controversy after a report claimed TMC had sought Sourav Ganguly's help to persuade him to resign, enabling Mamata to contest a bypoll from Baharampur. —PTI

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'PICKED HONEST WORKER'

No discussion on Deve Gowda: BYV

BENGALURU, 8 JUNE

Karnataka BJP President BY Vijayendra on Monday said a common worker who had honestly served the organisation had been nominated for the Rajya Sabha polls. He clarified that the nomination of former prime minister and JD(S) patriarch HD Deve Gowda was not discussed at the state unit level.

This comes amid criticism, including from the ruling Congress, accusing BJP of ignoring Gowda, who just turned 94.

On Sunday, BJP announced Prof M Nagaraja as its Rajya Sabha candidate as the party can win one of the four seats going to polls on 18 June.

The polls come as four MPs, including Gowda, are set to retire. JD(S) was reportedly hoping that BJP would re-nominate its supremo. BJP also named Lingaraj Patil and Raghu Kautilya for the Legislative Council polls.

He said Nagaraja belongs to the backward Kuruba, grew up in RSS, and served in ABVP and also as the state vice-president. He added that Raghu Kautilya of the Madivala community served as OBC morcha chief. Seven MLCs — Congress' Naseer Ahmed, Tippannappa, and BK Hariprasad, BJP leaders N Nagaraju (MTB), Prathap Simha Nayak K, and Sunil Vallyapur; and Govinda Raju [JD(S)] — are set to retire on 30 June. BJP can win two MLC seats, while Congress has fielded candidates for remaining five seats. Congress has 134 MLAs in 224-member Assembly, BJP 62 and JD(S) 18. — PTI

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Man, daughter held for Rs 5.30 cr job scam in City

BENGALURU, 8 JUNE

A man and his daughter were arrested for allegedly deceiving job seekers of over Rs 5.30 crore by claiming they could secure government jobs through influential contacts. Mansoor Ahmed and Shamshad Begum targeted more than 40 individuals from North Karnataka, promising jobs in departments like Railways, Income Tax, and Health, claiming connections with senior officials. They collected the money, issued fake appointment letters, and operated fake training centres in Bengaluru, Mumbai, and Kolkata. The police started an investigation after a victim lodged a complaint on 17 November 2025. On 4 June, the accused were arrested, and efforts are ongoing to recover the stolen funds and continue the probe. —*PTI*

Mysuru woman found dead; family blames in-laws

MYSURU, 8 JUNE

A 30-year-old homemaker was found dead by hanging at her residence in Saraswathipuram in Mysuru on Monday. According to the police, the victim has been identified as Sandhya, daughter of Geetha Ningaraju couple of Hunsur town. Geetha Ningaraj was a former president of Hunsur Town Municipal Council.Sandhya was married to Akshay, son of Mahadevau of TK Layout. The couple were living separately at their house in Saraswathipuram near Javaregowda Park. The parents of Sandhya alleged that the couple had marital discord and alleged murder of their daughter by her in-laws, husband, and family members. They demanded a detailed probe into this incident. Saraswathipuram Police have registered a case and investigation is underway. —*SALAR NEWS*

Panchayat elections in Karnataka by year-end: Khandre

BENGALURU, 8 JUNE

Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Minister Eshwar Khandre on Monday said steps would be taken to conduct all panchayats elections in the State by the end of this year.

Speaking to reporters after holding an introductory meeting with senior officials of the department in Bengaluru, he said the process of constituency delimitation and reservation would be completed within the next eight weeks. Thereafter, the Karnataka State Election Commission would undertake the election process.

He also assured that steps would be taken to fill 4,000 of the 8,770 vacant posts in the Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department.

The Department has 25,540 sanctioned posts, of which 8,770 are vacant. Of these, 268 are Group A posts, 1,079 are Group B posts, 5,294 are Group C posts, and 2,129 are Group D posts, he said. —*PTI*

HM orders crackdown on underage drinking

No ID, no entry in pubs and clubs: Priyank cites study saying 33 per cent of minors drink

BENGALURU, 8 JUNE

Priyank Kharge, the State's new Home Minister, has ordered police across the State to crackdown on liquor-serving establishments serving underaged youth.

In a statement on X on Monday, Priyank said he directed City police officials to issue notices to all pubs, breweries, bars, clubs, lounges, restaurants and liquor-serving establishments to strictly prevent underage entry.

He cited a study that covered 4,093 students in Bengaluru and said it raised serious concerns over the substance addiction among minors. He said that the 33 per cent of the subjects reported alcohol use and the median age of starting alcohol consumption was 17 years, with some cases reported as early as 8 years. He said that 18 per cent reported tobacco addiction.

"This is not just a licensing issue," he said. "It is a youth safety and public-health issue… Commercial profit cannot come at the cost of the safety and future of our children. No ID, no entry".

Priyank directed officials to hold owners, managers and licence holders accountable if the establishment served alcohol to minors. He also said that CCTV should be preserved to to enable verification. —*Salar News*

Tell RSS to keep documents ready: Priyank

After Sudhir Bangera was arrested for issuing a death threat and casteist remarks against him, Priyank Kharge quipped on X that BJP's the "fear, anxiety and anger" was already showing, even though it had been just a few days after he took charge as Home Minister. "Please convey my regards to your 'Body of Individuals' (RSS) and ask them to keep the documents ready for the registration of your political party," he said, tagging the BJP.

MLC SEEKS TASK FORCE TO COMBAT GANJA 'MENACE'

BENGALURU, 8 JUNE

Congress MLC Dinesh Gooligowda urged Home Minister Priyank Kharge on Monday to constitute a Special Task Force (STF), increase police patrolling and prohibit tobacco products near schools and collages to combat the "growing menace of narcotic substances (drugs/ganja)".

He said that the spread of ganja has become a major social menace and students unable to afford these substances are reportedly occasionally "resorting to (other) unlawful activities".

Hence, he argued that the State government should have police patrolling within a 1km radius around educational institutions, with schools and colleges starting soon.

He called for strict enforcing of the COTPA Act, which bans the sale of tobacco products within 200m of schools and a mandatory review of the enforcement in monthly crime meetings.

The MLC also said that a STF should be formed in every district "to identify and dismantle networks" involved in the sale and consumption of narcotics.

Simultaneously, he said that medical rehabilitation and counselling mechanisms should be implemented to help students who have already "fallen victim to addiction" and sought a dedicated helpline to encourage citizens to report narcotic networks.

He also stressed the importance awareness programmes in curriculum. —*Salar News*

Deve Gowda's illustrious 5 decade career to end

BENGALURU, 8 JUNE

RS nomination RS nominat-The parliamentary career of former prime minister HD Deve Gowda, spanning nearly five decades, is set to conclude on 25 June as the JD(S) patriarch has not been renominated for the Rajya Sabha by the BJP-led NDA ahead of the 18 June elections.

The BJP on Sunday announced M Nagaraja as its candidate for one of Karnataka's four Rajya Sabha seats. The Congress is expected to secure the remaining three seats, leaving the 93-year-old Deve Gowda without another term in Parliament.

A six-time Lok Sabha member, two-time Rajya Sabha MP and seven-time Karnataka MLA, Deve Gowda has been among the country's most enduring political figures. He first entered the Karnataka Assembly as an Independent in 1962 at the age of 28 and later served as Leader of the Opposition and a minister in the State government.

A civil engineering diploma holder, he became Karnataka's 14th chief minister in 1994 before rising to national prominence as India's 11th prime minister, heading the United Front government from June 1996 to April 1997.

Known for championing farmers' issues, irrigation projects and the Cauvery water dispute, Deve Gowda's retirement will leave Parliament without any former prime minister as a sitting member. His son and former chief minister, HD Kumaraswamy, currently serves in the Union Cabinet.

The Congress seized on the development to criticise the BJP-JD(S) alliance. Congress general secretary Randeep Singh Surjewala termed the decision a "humiliation" for Deve Gowda, noting that the Congress had supported his election to the Rajya Sabha despite political differences.

Surjewala said Deve Gowda had once strongly opposed an alliance with the BJP, but the JD(S) joined the NDA in 2023, after which Kumaraswamy became a Union Minister.

Former prime minister HD Deve Gowda at the mango and jackfruit mela in Lalbagh on Sunday. He had urged the Centre to take note of the price crash for the fruit farmers —*X @JANATADAL_S*

However, the JD(S) on X, rejected the charge, stating that the Congress had repeatedly betrayed the party and was responsible for the collapse of the JD(S)-Congress coalition goernment in 2019.

It accused the Congress of doing politics over a senior leader. —*PTI*

HC hears Siddaramaiah's plea challenging Guv's sanction in MUDA case

BENGALURU, 8 JUNE

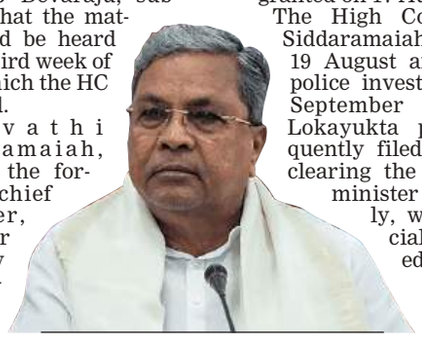
A Karnataka High Court division bench on Monday heard an appeal by former chief minister Siddaramaiah and others challenging a single-judge order upholding Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot's sanction to investigate the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) case.

During the proceedings, counsel appearing for Siddaramaiah sought to defer the inquiry scheduled for August. However, Aditya Narayanan, counsel for landowner J Devaraju, submitted that the matter could be heard in the third week of July, which the HC accepted.

Parvathi Siddaramaiah, wife of the former chief minister, and her family members allegedly received 14 alternative residential plots worth about Rs 56 crore from MUDA in exchange for her 3 acres 16 gunte of land in Survey No. 464 of Kesare village, Mysore

Snehamayi Krishna filed a complaint with the Mysuru Lokayukta Police on 3 July 2024, alleging that Siddaramaiah misused his position by influencing officials to secure high-value compensation, and sought an FIR and investigation. Krishna also approached the Governor in mid-2024 for sanction to prosecute, which the Governor granted on 17 August.

The High Court rejected Siddaramaiah's appeal on 19 August and ordered a police investigation on 24 September 2024. The Lokayukta police subsequently filed a 'B' report clearing the former chief minister and his family, which the special court accepted. —*ANI*



People cover themselves amid heavy rainfall, in Bengaluru —*PTI*

IMD issues red alert for heavy rain in coastal Karnataka

MANGALURU, 8 JUNE

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a red alert for Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts as the southwest monsoon intensified along the Karnataka coast, bringing forecasts of extremely heavy rainfall over the next two days.

The region has witnessed widespread rain since the monsoon onset, with rivers and streams receiving significant inflows. Uttara Kannada is also expected to receive heavy rainfall, while gusty winds of 40–50 kmph and rough sea conditions are likely along the coast.

Authorities have warned that rainfall exceeding 20 cm in 24 hours could trigger waterlogging, transport disruptions, infrastructure damage and localised flooding. Fishermen have been advised not to venture into the Arabian Sea, while tourists have been barred from entering the waterline at beaches. Police, coastal security personnel and lifeguards have been placed on alert. While no major flooding has been reported, some low-lying areas in Mangaluru have experienced water accumulation.

State Health Minister UT Khader warned that engineers would be held accountable if waterlogged potholes caused accidents during the monsoon. —*PTI*

'Capable' Zameer should get ministerial berth: DyCM

TUMAKURU, 8 JUNE

Deputy Chief Minister G Parameshwara on Monday said that Congress MLA BZ Zameer Ahmed Khan, who was previously the housing minister, should get a ministerial berth as he was "capable leader".

Speaking to reporters in his home district of Tumakuru on Monday, Parameshwara said he didn't know why Zameer missed out in the first phase.

"There is a demand across the State to give him… a capable leader from the minority community… a ministerial berth in the second phase," he said. "The High Command will consider it. There is nothing wrong with giving him a berth." Simultaneously,

Parameshwara expressed gratitude for being made the DyCM, saying he intends to fly to New Delhi and thank the High Command.

He also said that he missed several opportunities to become the Chief Minister, a long-standing demand among the Dalit community.

"Perhaps if I had won in 2013, Siddaramaiah would not have become Chief Minister. Maybe it was destiny. Because I lost, he became Chief Minister," he remarked. He said 2018 was another missed opportunity, describing politics as "unpredictable".

"At one stage, I even told the leadership that if I could not be given the Chief Minister's post, I would retire from politics," he added.

WATER PROJECTS & LAND ACQUISITION

Parameshwara said that the land acquisition for the Hemavati Express Link Canal, which had "stalled a bit" will be completed "quickly", as per the instructions of Chief Minister DK Shivakumar.

"We will convince the farming community," he said. According to a press release, land acquisition had been completed for the Yettinahole Integrated Drinking Water Supply Project and water was expected be released by July. However, there have been delays. He said all pending irrigation works must be completed in two years, and a District Task Force will be formed to meet deadlines.

Parameshwara, who also holds Sports portfolio, said Tumakuru city will become a "sports city". —*Salar News*

Lone Uppara MLA confident of cabinet berth

Chamarajanagar MLA C Puttarangashetty on Monday exuded confidence that he will be inducted into the Cabinet during the second phase of expansion by Chief Minister DK Shivakumar. peaking to reporters in Mysuru, he said that he was the only MLA who belongs to the "most backward" Uppara (OBC) community in the State. "I hope Congress High Command leaders will consider my seniority, and will induct me on my caste quota", he said.

Mysuru Police seize 280kg of ganja worth Rs 1 cr

MYSURU, 8 JUNE

Mysuru City Police's CCB officers have uncovered a major drug racket by seizing 280kg of ganja being transported to an undisclosed location via Mysuru. The consignment, worth Rs 1.40 crore, was concealed among coconut saplings in a truck. A team led by ACP Mohammed Karim Rowthar tracked the vehicle and arrested four suspects Mohammed Zubair, Mudassir Ahammed, Abubaqar Siddique, and Syed Mazar.

The police intercepted the vehicle near Hasiru Goodu Nursery, Green County layout, on Malavalli–Mysuru Road, close to VVET, under Alanahalli Police Station limits. Speaking to reporters, Police Commissioner Seema Latkar revealed that, over the past three months, 28 individuals involved in illegal ganja sales were arrested, with 43kg of ganja and 164 grams of synthetic drugs recovered in 12 NDPS cases.

Police also registered 36 cases for ganja smoking, as the district tackled various crimes including theft, burglary, and vehicle theft, with 55 arrests and recovery of Rs 2.09 crore gold. —*Salar News*

Bangkok passenger held at KIA with hydroponic ganja worth Rs 3.57 cr

BENGALURU, 8 JUNE

A passenger who arrived from Bangkok at Kempegowda International airport in the City was arrested with hydroponic ganja, valued at Rs 3.57 crore, officials said on Monday. The passenger was intercepted by the customs officials on 5 June. Taking to 'X', Bengaluru Customs said that 10.20kg of hydroponic ganja, valued at Rs 3.57 crore, concealed in checked-in baggage, was seized from him.

In another incident on 4 June, a passenger who arrived from Bangkok was held with 6.66kg of hydroponic ganja, valued at Rs 2.33 crore, concealed in baggage at Terminal 2 of Kempegowda International Airport. —*PTI*

DEVARAJ URS' GRANDSON

AICC Secretary Suraj Hegde no more

BENGALURU, 8 JUNE

AICC Secretary and Karnataka government's Guarantee Committee vice chairman Suraj Hegde died of cardiac arrest late on Sunday night in Bengaluru, party sources said on Monday. He was 55 and was undergoing treatment at a private hospital.

Hegde was the former in-charge of the Indian Youth Congress and the grandson of former chief minister Devaraj Urs.

Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said his contribution to strengthening the Congress party through organisational work and public concern was unparalleled. "Today, we have lost an active leader who always maintained an excellent rapport with party workers," he added.

Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi said he was deeply saddened by Hegde's passing, noting that the Youth Congress was "not just an assignment" for him but a platform to mentor young Indians who continue the Congress's commitment to justice and democracy.

AICC Chief Mallikarjun Kharge said he was saddened by the untimely demise, remembering him as "a young and promising leader who served the party with

dedication as an AICC Secretary."

State Congress President BK Hariprasad said Hegde dedicated his life to the upliftment of backward communities, Dalits, and other marginalised sections of society. In the truest sense, he was a genuine heir to the legacy of equality and social justice championed by Devaraj Urs. Former CM Siddaramaiah, AICC general secretaries K C Venugopal and Randeep Singh Surjewala, several Karnataka ministers and Congress leaders at both the state and national levels have also condoled the death of Hegde. —*PTI*

- Hegde was 55 and was undergoing treatment at a private hospital

Shivam ponzi: Actors get CID notice

Dhananjay, Vasishta N Simha, Ragini Dwivedi, and Sapthami Gowda —*WIKIPEDIA/IMDB*

BELAGAVI, 8 JUNE

The CID, which is intensifying its investigation into the Rs 2,400-crore Shivam Associates deposit fraud case, has reportedly issued notices to several prominent Kannada film actors and actresses. Those summoned include Dhananjay, Vasishta N Simha, Ragini Dwivedi, and Sapthami Gowda, who participated in the grand "Kannada Utsava" event held in Belagavi on 27 December last year.

The event, organised under the leadership of Shivam Associates owner Shivanand Neelannavar, involved thousands of attendees and expenditure running into crores of rupees. Authorities suspect that funds collected from investors might have been utilised to organise the event. The investigation reveals that Shivam Associates has allegedly defrauded investors of thousands of crores of rupees, with thousands from various districts and states investing money based on promises of high returns.

The issuance of notices to film personalities has added a new dimension to the case. Investigators believe significant details may emerge once the actors are questioned, providing key insights into the scam. —*Salar News*

— PTI

Bihar minister attacked near crash victim's home

MADHUBANI, 8 JUNE

Bihar Labour Resources Minister Arun Shankar Prasad's vehicle was pelted with stones during a visit to an accident victim's house in Madhubani district, police confirmed. The windshield was damaged, but the minister was unharmed as he was at the gate of the victim's residence. Seven people, including three women, were arrested in connection with the incident. The event occurred on Sunday evening in Thahar village, where the minister, acting as the local MLA, paid condolences for a person who died in a road accident on Friday night. A police statement said, "Some anti-social elements provoked women present and positioned them in front of the vehicle. The group raised demands and damaged the windshield with stones. Police ensured the minister's safety and escorted his vehicle away.—*PTI*

Tap water coverage reaches 82% of rural homes: Govt

NEW DELHI, 8 JUNE

Rural tap water coverage has risen from 3.23 crore households in August 2019 to 15.84 crore by May 2026, covering 81.87 per cent of India's 19.35 crore rural households. The government attributed this progress to the Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), launched in 2019. Budget allocations increased by 488 per cent between 2020-21 and 2026-27 to Rs 67,670 crore. The document states that 2.77 lakh villages achieved 100 per cent tap water coverage. Aspirational districts saw coverage rise from 23.62 lakh households in 2019 to 2.20 crore in 2026, with significant improvements in schools, Anganwadi centres, gram panchayats, and health centres, reducing waterborne diseases and improving sanitation.—*PTI*

Youth Congress removes posters targeting Rahul

NEW DELHI, 8 JUNE

The Delhi Youth Congress removed posters targeting Rahul Gandhi in the capital ahead of an INDIA bloc meeting. The posters featured statements from opposition leaders like Sharad Pawar, Mamata Banerjee, Udhayanidhi Stalin, and Arvind Kejriwal, most criticising Rahul or Congress. IYC President Akshay Lakra called the campaign a political stunt, saying, "These are cheap political tactics employed by the BJP, AAP, and others," adding they would respond to such provocations. The posters claimed Gandhi lacked consistency and criticised him for not possessing political understanding. The Youth Congress took down the posters from key locations, warning that any divisive tactics would be met with a strong response.—*PTI*

'Free travel for women will cost Keralam ₹1,300 cr'

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, 8 JUNE

Keralam Transport Minister CP John said free travel for women in KSRTC buses, starting in June, would cost between Rs 712 crore and Rs 1,300 crore annually. Details will be revealed after a Cabinet meeting on 10 June. The scheme, part of UDF promises, will include transgender persons and apply to all women without categorisation. John explained, "Rs 712 crore will be needed if limited to ordinary buses, Rs 1,300 crore if extended to all categories." The government will subsidise the scheme, which will be monitored post-launch, with implementation from 15 June.—*PTI*

Not part of INDIA: DMK hints at separate anti-BJP front

CPI(M), SP ask Congress to treat allies better

Congress MP Sonia Gandhi hugs TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee during the INDIA bloc meeting in New Delhi on Monday —*PTI*

NEW DELHI, 8 JUNE

DMK on Monday declared that it was no longer part of the Opposition INDIA bloc, blaming Congress for the split and signalling a major realignment in opposition politics ahead of the 2029 Lok Sabha elections.

DMK, however, claimed that a "strong, secular, and anti-BJP alliance may form in the future".

DMK's TKS Elangovan said the party had chosen to operate independently after several former allies joined the Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK)-led government in Tamil Nadu. He said the DMK would now take decisions through its own organisational mechanisms rather than alliance forums.

CPI State Secretary M Veerapandian urged the DMK to remain within the opposition fold, arguing that the national alliance needed the support of the Dravidian party.

However, DMK said it would monitor the decisions made by other opposition parties in Delhi to determine if there is any common ground to support.

Meanwhile, tensions within the alliance surfaced during the meeting, with CPI(M) leader John Brittas raising objections to remarks made by Congress leaders during the Keralam election campaign, including allegations of a tacit understanding between the Left and BJP. Brittas said such accusations undermined the alliance's purpose and urged the Congress, as the largest constituent, to prioritise national interests over state-level rivalries.

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav urged the Congress to back the strongest regional forces, while RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav called for a street-level campaign focused on 2029. National Conference leader Omar Abdullah described the Congress as the "glue" holding the alliance together. Rahul Gandhi acknowledged allies' concerns and pledged to work towards preserving opposition unity. —*PTI*

Nicobar project's critics suffering 'geographical illiteracy': Govt hits back

NEW DELHI, 8 JUNE

Centre on Monday defended the Great Nicobar Island project, describing it as a strategic necessity for safeguarding India's maritime and economic interests and dismissing critics as suffering from "geographical illiteracy".

The response came days after Congress leader **Rahul Gandhi** alleged that the project was aimed at benefiting a single businessman Gautam Adani through tourism ventures rather than serving national interests. Gandhi, who visited the islands, had urged the government to prioritise the environment over commercial development.

Sources said the project would help India leverage Great Nicobar's location near the Malacca Strait, one of the world's busiest maritime trade routes.

The project envisages an international container transshipment port, a civilian-cum-naval greenfield airport, a township and a power plant. Sources said the airport would strengthen India's maritime domain awareness, operational reach and crisis-response capabilities in the Indo-Pacific region.

The defence ministry will contribute Rs 13,000 crore towards the airport. The facility is planned with an initial passenger handling capacity of 1.35 million annually by 2040.

Rejecting suggestions that existing military infrastructure could be expanded instead, sources said the runway at INS Baaz was not part of the project and that any further extension would require major land reclamation while affecting tribal areas and local biodiversity.

They also highlighted the region's hydrocarbon potential and noted that around 80 per cent of China's crude oil imports and 70 per cent of its LNG imports pass through the Malacca Strait. —*PTI*

TMC Falta candidate held near Nepal border

DIAMOND HARBOUR, 8 JUNE

Locals ransack Jahangir's office in Falta. The mob reportedly smashed windowpanes and damaged furniture —*PTI*

Police arrested TMC leader **Jahangir Khan** near the India-Nepal border in north Bengal on Monday on charges of extortion, police said.

Khan, had finished fourth in the Falta Assembly repoll held on 21 May, after announcing his withdrawal from the contest days before polling.

Khan presented himself like the character from the film 'Pushpa' during the election campaign.

Investigators alleged that Khan was attempting to flee the country after multiple FIRs were lodged against him, including cases related to extortion, electoral malpractices and land grabbing. The Calcutta High Court had on 26 May vacated an interim protection granted to him seven FIRs registered at Falta police station in South 24 Parganas district.

Following news of his arrest, angry locals allegedly ransacked his office in Falta. The mob reportedly smashed windowpanes and damaged furniture. Several packets of relief materials were also found inside the premises, triggering further outrage among residents, who accused Khan and his associates of withholding supplies meant for distribution among the needy. —*PTI*

TMC MOVES HC AGAINST LOP RECOGNITION

Mamata Banerjee-led TMC on Monday approached the Calcutta High Court challenging the Assembly Speaker's recognition of Ritabrata Banerjee, as LoP . Citing urgency ahead of the Assembly's first session on June 18, the party sought an early hearing. The matter will be heard on June 11. In a major setback for the TMC, 58 of its 80 MLAs backed Ritabrata, rejecting Sobhandeb Chattopadhyay. In the Assembly elections, the BJP won 207 seats and the TMC 80. —*PTI*

Russian Prez Vladimir Putin recently pledged non-interference in ties between Narendra Modi's India and Xi Jinping's China—*PTI*

China wants India as ally

BEIJING, 8 JUNE

China on Monday said India and China should maintain the "right strategic perception" and view each other as cooperative partners and opportunities for development rather than rivals or threats.

Responding to comments by Russian President Vladimir Putin on Sino-India relations, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said the border situation between the two countries was "generally stable" and communication remained smooth.

Lin said both sides should handle bilateral relations from a long-term strategic perspective, strengthen mutual trust, expand cooperation, properly manage differences and promote the steady development of ties.

On India's concerns over China's close relationship with Pakistan, Lin reiterated Beijing's position that India and Pakistan should resolve differences through dialogue and consultation to maintain regional peace and stability. He did not directly address New Delhi's concerns over China's defence cooperation with Islamabad, including allegations of technical support during Operation Sindoor.

Commenting on India-China-Russia ties, Lin said all three nations were major emerging economies and that maintaining healthy relations served their mutual interests as well as global peace, stability and prosperity. He added that China was willing to remain in communication with both countries to advance trilateral cooperation.

Putin, last week, said Russia's relationships with India and China had evolved naturally and independently. Praising Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping, he said both leaders were working to resolve outstanding issues, including the border dispute, and stressed that Moscow's ties with one did not come at the expense of the other. —*PTI*

BJP eyes sweep in Gujarat RS; Cong faces wipeout

AHMEDABAD, 8 JUNE

All four BJP candidates on Monday filed nomination papers for the upcoming Rajya Sabha elections from Gujarat. With the Congress not contesting the polls the victory of the BJP candidates looks certain as of now.

The four Rajya Sabha seats from Gujarat are falling vacant as the six-year terms of sitting MPs Rambhai Mokariya, Narhari Amin, and Ramilaben Bara (all from BJP), and Shaktisinh Gohil of Congress are ending on 21 June. Gohil is the lone Congress member from Gujarat in the Rajya Sabha and with his term ending, the Congress will not have any representative from Gujarat in the Upper House of the Parliament.

Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel, Deputy CM Harsh Sanghvi, ministers, state BJP president Jagdish Vishwakarma and other senior leaders of the party were present when Rajubhai Shukla, Mansinh Parmar, Mukeshbhai Rathwa and Jitendra Kanjariya submitted their nomination papers at the assembly complex in Gandhinagar.

Meanwhile, Maharashtra minister and NCP leader Chhagan Bhujbal dismissed speculation of being upset over not being nominated to the Rajya Sabha and, in a lighter vein, said, "I am a kabaddi player, not a chess player". Bhujbal said his turn for a parliamentary berth could come in the future. —*PTI*

Cockroach Janata Party is BJP's C team: Suspended magistrate

BALRAMPUR, 8 JUNE

Suspended Bareilly City Magistrate Alankar Agnihotri on Monday alleged that the recently formed Cockroach Janata Party (CJP) is closely linked to the BJP, describing it as the ruling party's "C team".

Addressing a programme in Balrampur, Agnihotri, who heads the Rashtriya Adhikar Morcha, claimed the BJP publicly labelled the CJP a "traitor" while simultaneously facilitating its activities. He pointed to the large reception organised for CJP leader Abhijit Dipke at an airport on June 6 and the party being granted permission to protest at Jantar Mantar.

The CJP emerged in May amid controversy over remarks attributed to the Chief Justice of India and quickly gained attention online through memes and commentary on unemployment, examination paper leaks and education.

Agnihotri also raised allegations regarding missing donations worth crores of rupees at the Ram Temple, accusing the ruling party and certain individuals of misusing funds offered by devotees. The allegations were recently echoed by Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, who urged judicial intervention. However, Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust general secretary Champat Rai said internal audits were underway and no evidence supporting the claims had surfaced.

Agnihotri further said the Rashtriya Adhikar Morcha and allied parties could contest 270 seats in the 2027 Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections.

He was suspended in January after resigning from the Provincial Civil Service, alleging the government was "anti-Brahmin". —*PTI*

CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke holds BR Ambedkar's autobiography at a protest demanding Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan resign over alleged examination lapses in New Delhi on Saturday —*PTI*

CITIZENS OF NOWHERE ?

WB sent 4.8K illegal immigrants to B'desh

KOLKATA, 8 JUNE

4,800 illegal immigrants have been sent to Bangladesh from holding centres set up in Bihar's border district —*ANI*

West Bengal Chief Minister **Suvendu Adhikari** on Sunday said around 4,800 illegal immigrants have been sent to Bangladesh from holding centres set up in Bihar's border districts, and 836 such people are awaiting deportation from these facilities.

Adhikari asserted that illegal immigration was a big issue, and said his government has already handed over land to the BSF to erect around 100 km of fencing, out of the 556 km required to secure the India-Bangladesh border.

The land handover is a continuous process and is necessary for the security of the country, he said, adding that securing the international boundary is the state government's priority. "We have handed over to the BSF around 100 km stretch of land out of 556 km required for fencing, and prioritised the Chicken's Neck corridor in north Bengal," the chief minister said, while addressing a preparatory meeting for the BJP's special training camp.

The 'Chicken's Neck', officially known as the Siliguri Corridor, is a narrow stretch of land- about 20-22 km wide and nearly 60 km long- in north Bengal that connects the rest of India with the north-eastern states. It is considered a critical and sensitive lifeline from both security and strategic perspectives.

Emphasising that his government has started deporting illegal immigrants, who do not fall under the Citizenship Amendment Act, as per a law of the Union government, Adhikari said, "These people are being handed over to the BSF directly."

Though the law was applied in other states, the previous TMC government in West Bengal did not implement it, he said, adding that illegal immigrants were kept in the state jails using facilities at taxpayers' expense. —*PTI*

YouTuber held for videos 'targeting' TVK

MADURAI 8 JUNE

Well-known YouTuber **Maridhas** was arrested on Monday by Chennai City Police for allegedly posting a series of videos targeting the TVK government, Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay and ministers, said officials.

Maridhas was picked up from his residence at Surya Nagar here. He is currently being brought to Chennai, they said. "Complete details regarding the specific sections under which he has been booked will be made available following further investigation," police said.

According to police sources, following continuous allegations and critical commentary online against the state government, the Cyber Crime department of Chennai Police registered a case.

Maridhas, who commands a significant social media following, has frequently courted controversy and has faced multiple police cases.

Meanwhile, Opposition leaders in Tamil Nadu condemned the arrest, accusing the TVK-led government of authoritarianism.

Senior BJP leader Tamilisai Soundararajan, said in Tiruchirappalli, that the ruling dispensation's shift in stance on freedom of expression. "Before coming to power, CM Vijay spoke passionately about freedom of expression and condemned the arrest of those who voiced against the government. However, this current governance exhibits intolerance," she said. —*PTI*

Man 'hacks' 3 minor daughters to death in Jharkhand

GIRIDIH, 8 JUNE

A 40-year-old man allegedly hacked his three minor daughters to death in Jharkhand's Giridih district, a senior police officer confirmed. The incident occurred in Turukdiha village under Muffasil police station around 8.30am. Two daughters were aged 6, and one was 17. The accused has been arrested for allegedly using a sharp weapon to commit the murders. The reason remains unclear, and investigation is ongoing. The bodies have been sent for post-mortem at a government hospital, the officer added, as authorities probe the motive behind the tragic act. —*PTI*

— *PTI*

Bus crashes into multiple vehicles in Mumbai, 1 dead

MUMBAI, 8 JUNE

A man was killed and three injured when a BEST bus collided with vehicles in Dadar, Mumbai. The incident occurred around 9.30am near Plaza Cinema, when the driver lost control. The bus hit two cars, a cab, and two motorbikes, causing debris to scatter. Two motorbike riders, the bus conductor, and another individual were injured and rushed to Sion Hospital. The deceased is a 22-year-old man with severe head injuries. The injured are Rishabh Gupta, 25, Satish Waghmare, 48, and Mahesh Doiphode, 50. The driver was detained, and traffic was diverted as rescue teams responded. —*PTI*

Landlord not liable for env violations by tenant

NEW DELHI, 8 JUNE

The Supreme Court upheld a National Green Tribunal (NGT) order stating a landlord cannot be held liable for environmental violations by a tenant's chemical unit. Justices Satish Chandra Sharma and Sanjeev Sachdeva refused to interfere with the 14 November 2025 order. The Gujarat Pollution Control Board (GPCB) challenged the ruling, which set aside its Rs 25 lakh environmental damage penalty on Surat landlord Jagmohan Jalan. The case arose after a 2021 enforcement against a dye-intermediate unit exceeding effluent limits. Jalan argued he was unaware of the unlicensed unit; the GPCB maintained the penalty, and the Supreme Court dismissed the plea. —*PTI*

— *x*

Rare auroras may light up Northern Indian skies

NEW DELHI, 8 JUNE

A rare celestial spectacle could unfold over parts of northern India on 8 June night as a powerful geomagnetic storm triggered by solar activity reaches Earth. The event follows a massive eruption from the Sun on 6 June, when a billion-tonne cloud of magnetised plasma was blasted into space at 1,400 kmph. The US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Space Weather Prediction Centre has issued a G3 (strong) geomagnetic storm watch, with brief periods of G4 (severe) conditions. The storm is forecast to peak between 11.30pm on Monday and 2.30am on Tuesday. Highly unusual crimson auroras may become visible in India's darkest, highest-altitude regions, including Ladakh's Hanle Dark Sky Reserve, Pangong Tso, Leh, as well as parts of Jammu and Kashmir, Uttarakhand and Arunachal. —*SALAR NEWS*

IAF's Mi-17 choppers to transport NEET papers

NEET re-test will be held on 21 June following paper leak

NEW DELHI, 8 JUNE

Indian Air Force to deploy Mi-17 helicopters to carry NEET UG re-test question papers — *AIF*

Ahead of the Re-NEET UG 2026 examination on 21 June, the Indian Air Force (IAF) will deploy Mi-17 helicopters and other aircraft to transport question papers from 18 locations across the country as part of an extensive security operation aimed at preventing any repeat of last year's paper leak controversy.

Officials said the use of military air assets will ensure secure and timely transportation of question papers, minimise transit delays and safeguard the integrity of the examination process. Military and security personnel have also been placed on standby to provide additional assistance, if required, during the conduct of the re-examination.

The National Testing Agency (NTA) will conduct the examination in a single shift from 2pm to 5pm at centres across the country.

Paper setters under lockdown

To avoid any further leaks and ensure the sanctity of the examination, authorities have placed all paper setters involved in preparing the question paper under strict lockdown until 21 June.

According to reports, paper setters, moderators and translators have been housed at a secure undisclosed location and barred from communicating with the outside world. Access to mobile phones, laptops, internet services and other personal communication devices has been prohibited.

Officials said every stage of the examination cycle — from question paper preparation and translation to moderation, printing, packaging, storage, transportation and distribution — is being subjected to enhanced scrutiny.

The NTA has also rejected claims circulating on social media regarding the alleged leak, sale or prior access to the question paper, describing them as false, fabricated and misleading.

CBI probe exposed educator-led leak network

Investigations by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) into the NEET-UG paper leak uncovered what officials described as a structured network involving educators who allegedly exploited their positions in the examination-setting process.

Among those named in the probe was chemistry lecturer PV Kulkarni. Along with botany lecturer Manisha Mandhare, he allegedly conducted private coaching sessions from his residence in Pune, where students were provided with exact questions, answer options and solutions allegedly sourced from the examination paper. —*Salar News*

Water cannons disperse National Students' Union of India members protesting the NEET paper leak, in Dehradun, Uttarakhand, on Monday —*PTI*

Don't politicise edu: CBSE opposes NSUI plea in HC

NEW DELHI, 8 JUNE

- The NSUI has sought an independent inquiry into the alleged large-scale irregularities in the on-screen marking (OSM) system, claiming that a sharp decline in Class 12 results this year had triggered concerns among students

"We don't want education to be politicised like this," the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) told the Delhi High Court on Monday while opposing a public interest litigation filed by the Congress-affiliated National Students' Union of India (NSUI) over alleged irregularities in the evaluation of Class 12 answer scripts.

A vacation bench of Justices Neena Bansal Krishna and Madhu Jain, however, sought responses from the Centre and CBSE on the petition and listed the matter for hearing on 12 June.

The NSUI has sought an independent inquiry into the alleged large-scale irregularities in the on-screen marking (OSM) system, claiming that a sharp decline in Class 12 results this year had triggered concerns among students and parents over the fairness and reliability of the evaluation process. It has also sought manual rechecking and physical verification of answer sheets and requested that the verification and revaluation portal be kept open for an additional month.

CBSE counsel MA Niyaz argued that the board had repeatedly extended deadlines and was addressing students' grievances. He also questioned the maintainability of the PIL, saying it had been filed by the student wing of a political party.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court on Monday issued notice to CBSE on a plea filed by Pransu Jigarkumar Patel, a student from Saudi Arabia, seeking declaration of his Class 12 improvement examination result.

A bench of Justices Manmohan and Vijay Bishnoi observed that the matter concerned a student's future and directed CBSE to obtain instructions. Patel claimed the non-declaration of his result had jeopardised his admission prospects after examinations in Gulf countries were cancelled due to the war. —*Salar News*

Procedural delays keep 150 Indians in B'desh jails

DHAKA, 8 JUNE

Indians are languishing in Bangladeshi prisons even though they had completed their jail terms —*AI*

Nearly 150 Indians continue to languish in Bangladeshi prisons despite completing their jail terms as procedural delays debarred their return home, officials said on Monday.

A prison official said 152 foreigners, including 148 Indians, were languishing in Bangladeshi jails though they had completed their jail terms, according to prison statistics published six months ago.

The official, who preferred to remain anonymous, said several of these foreign inmates had completed their terms years ago, but the official identification process alongside bureaucratic or diplomatic inaction prolonged their captivity. He said a large number of the Indian inmates were detained on charges such as illegal cross-border entry.

News portal Bdnews24.com on Monday reported 17 Indians continued to languish in the southwestern Shariatpur District Jail alone despite the completion of their prison terms, with the correction centre officials saying their repatriation remained stalled.

The inmates could not be released as their identities remain unverified, while repeated attempts to contact the Indian Embassy yielded no response, the report said.

Jailer Papiya Sultana said police had detained 20 people at different times near the Padma Bridge in 2022 and 2023, and they were later sent to prison on court orders. "Among them, Indian nationals, identified as Satyendra Kumar and Babul Singh, died in jail on 2 February 2024, while another inmate, known only as Rajan, died on 29 May 2025." —*PTI*

Internet shut ahead of Jaipur temples & mosque demolition

JAIPUR, 8 JUNE

Mobile internet services were suspended in several parts of Jaipur on Monday as authorities launched an anti-encroachment drive to demolish five religious structures, including a mosque and two temples, for a road-widening project.

The Jaipur Development Authority is carrying out the operation at the Nandpuri underpass in Jagatpura to widen a road running parallel to a railway line to 80t. Besides the mosque and two temples, a satsang building and a mazar are also slated for demolition.

Around 3,000 police personnel have been deployed to maintain law and order during the exercise. Officials said 134 encroachments along the stretch had already been removed and stakeholders managing the religious structures were given time to voluntarily dismantle them.

According to an official order, mobile internet services, bulk SMS, MMS and social media platforms will remain suspended across Jaipur North and Jaipur East police districts from midnight on 8 June until midnight on 9 June. Voice call services will continue uninterrupted.

Divisional Commissioner V. Saravan Kumar said the restrictions were imposed to prevent rumours and maintain public order, citing the potential misuse of social media platforms.

Authorities have also restricted movement in parts of the area, deployed drone surveillance and temporarily disconnected electricity supply in the immediate vicinity as part of the security arrangements. —*PTI*

HUMAN-ANIMAL CONFLICT

LEOPARD KILLS CHILD IN UP, 7TH BIG-CAT VICTIM THIS YEAR

LAKHIMPUR KHERI, 8 JUNE

A seven-year-old boy was killed in a leopard attack in the Dhaurahra forest range, officials said on Monday. This takes the number of human deaths in big-cat attacks in the Dudhwa buffer zone this year to seven. Half a dozen have also been injured in leopard attacks.

The incident took place on Sunday evening in Laljipurwa village under the Isanagar police station area when a leopard attacked the boy, Shubham, while he was accompanying his father to irrigate their agricultural field.

According to police, the leopard emerged from the nearby vegetation and mauled the child. The animal fled after they boy's father and other villagers raised an alarm. Shubham was rushed to the Khamaria Community Health Centre, where he died.

Forest teams are equipped with cages and cameras had been deployed. —*PTI*

WOMAN KILLED IN WILD ELEPHANT ATTACK IN KERALA'S IDUKKI

IDUKKI, 8 JUNE

A 37-year-old woman was killed and her son injured in a wild elephant attack at Chinnakkanal in Idukki on Monday. The deceased is Mari.

According to the local residents, the incident occurred when the woman was on her way to drop her son at school. The two reportedly came face-to-face with a wild elephant while walking from their house to the main road. Heavy rain and dense fog prevailed in the area at the time, and it is suspected that the victims failed to notice the animal nearby.

Mari sustained fatal injuries in the attack and succumbed to wounds. Her son, who was injured in the incident, is undergoing treatment at a nearby hospital, police added. The incident triggered protests by local residents, who engaged in heated arguments with forest officials and questioned the steps taken by authorities despite repeated fatalities in wild elephant attacks in the region. —*PTI*

Jaaved Jaaferi with wife Habiba Jaaferi —*ANI*

Jaaved Jaaferi's wife duped of Rs 16.24 crore

MUMBAI, 8 JUNE

Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) suspended Assistant Commissioner Mahesh Patil with immediate effect after he was accused of cheating actor Jaaved Jaaferi's wife, Habiba Jaaferi, of Rs 16.24 crore in a redevelopment project fraud.

Patil and his associates allegedly persuaded Habiba to invest in a project in Mumbai's Bandra area by promising high returns and substantial profits. The accused are also alleged to have prepared forged documents as part of the scheme.

Following the registration of an FIR at Khar Police Station, Patil reportedly went absconding and has remained untraceable. Police have registered a cheating case against Patil and five others. The investigation has been transferred to the Mumbai Crime Branch.

Crime Branch teams are conducting raids at multiple locations to trace the suspended civic official and the other accused. Authorities are also examining the alleged forged documents and financial transactions. —*Agencies*

'NO LAW PROHIBITS SUCH RELATIONS'

Consentual pre-marital sex doesn't reflect character: SC

NEW DELHI, 8 JUNE

The Supreme Court has held that physical relationship between two consenting unmarried adults cannot be a ground to draw an adverse impression about the character of the person in that relationship.

A bench of Justices Manmohan and Manoj Misra made the observation while directing the Telangana State Level Police Recruitment Board to appoint a candidate whose selection as a police constable was set aside due to his involvement in a criminal case arising from a failed romantic relationship.

"Physical relationship between two consenting unmarried adults cannot and should not by itself be a ground to draw an adverse impression about the character of the person in that relationship. There is no law which prohibits two consenting unmarried adults to have a relationship of their choice," the bench said.

It allowed the appeal filed by the candidate and upheld a Telangana High Court single judge's order directing reconsideration of his appointment to the post of Stipendiary Cadet Trainee Police Constable. Telangana State Level Police Recruitment Board had cancelled his appointment on the ground that a rape on promise of marriage case registered against him in 2014 reflected moral turpitude.

The case arose from a relationship with a neighbour and was compounded before a Lok Adalat in 2015 after both parties reached a settlement. No charge under Section 376 IPC was ever pressed.

The court said the appellant and the victim were neighbours and in a relationship for four years. "Merely because the relationship did not culminate in marriage is no ground to believe that one party has cheated the other," SC said. —*PTI*

Delhi hotel owner's aide surrenders before court

NEW DELHI, 8 JUNE

A close aide and accountant of the owner of the south Delhi hotel gutted by a fire that killed 22 surrendered before a Delhi court on Monday.

The accused, Jay Mishra, is a long-time associate of hotel owner Lavkesh Bajaj and is believed to have handled financial and accounting for several of Bajaj's businesses. Investigators suspect he played a key role in the day-to-day functioning of Flourish Stays Bed and Breakfast in Malviya Nagar's Hauz Rani area, where the fire broke out on 4 June.

Mishra had been absconding since the incident, prompting raids in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. He was also named in a 2024 FIR related to poor safety infrastructure at the hotel. —*PTI*

CENTRE HAS 80 DAYS OF COAL RESERVES

HYDERABAD, 8 JUNE

Union Minister G Kishan Reddy announced that the Centre has enough coal reserves to power India for 80 days.

Speaking to reporters, he highlighted the NDA government's achievements since 2014, adding that exploration has begun in critical mineral blocks acquired in Argentina, with production expected soon. "Earlier, there used to be a shortage of coal. Now, the Government of India has coal reserves sufficient for 80 days of power generation," he said, noting that heavy monsoon rains could disrupt production. Reddy emphasised that, following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's directives, reserves have been maintained at this level. He also mentioned ongoing exploration and auctions for critical minerals, encouraging private imports.

He claimed the country now produces a record 1,040 million tonnes of coal annually, contrasting it with previous scams under the UPA. —*PTI*

MANIPUR SEEKS NRC UPDATION

Thousands of people took out a rally demanding NRC updation in Manipur before the conduct of the Census in the state. The rally, organised by 14 civil society organisations, started from Tiddim Ground and covered a distance of 5 km before concluding at Thau Ground, both in Imphal. Tight security was ensured to prevent any untoward incident. The agitators' spokesperson, Shanta Nahakpam, said, "The BJP raised the issue of illegal immigrants during election campaigns in Assam and West Bengal. Manipur, too, has several issues, including illegal immigration and border fencing." Elections to the 60-member assembly are likely to be held early next year —PTI

How democracies are the new digital authoritarians

"Digital authoritarianism" refers to governments using technology for surveillance and censorship to repress dissent.

China remains the master practitioner. There, sweeping surveillance and censorship at home is combined with cyber-espionage and disinformation, censorship and influence campaigns abroad.

But this problem is no longer confined to Moscow or Beijing. Democracies, too, are beginning to repress their citizens with the same tools, and export them abroad.

Two countries in particular – India and Israel – reveal how democracies are drifting toward the very digital authoritarianism they once opposed.

-MAGNIFIC

Israel exporting spyware

Israel, a democracy, permits private firms to export spyware under a state-regulated system.

Pegasus spyware, developed by the Israeli firm NSO Group, is marketed as a tool licensed to government agencies for counterterrorism and serious crime investigations.

However, investigations have linked it to the surveillance of journalists, activists, lawyers and political opponents.

Pegasus can infiltrate smartphones without the user clicking on a link. It can grant access to messages, calls, microphones and cameras.

Israel tightened export rules in 2021, insisting sales go only to trusted governments for legitimate purposes. Yet the problem has not disappeared.

In 2025, it was revealed Paragon Solutions, an Israeli spyware firm cofounded by former prime minister Ehud Barak, developed a powerful surveillance tool capable of compromising encrypted communications.

WhatsApp said last year nearly 100 journalists and members of civil society had been targeted using Paragon spyware.

Reporters at Citizen Lab later identified the spyware as a Paragon product, Graphite, and confirmed it had been used against journalists.

Through its export control system for offensive cyber tools, Israel is still allowing Israeli firms such as NSO Group and Paragon Solutions to sell spyware abroad, including Pegasus and Graphite.

India's Pegasus row

In India, Amnesty International's Security Lab reported forensic evidence of Pegasus being used on the phones of high-profile journalists.

Earlier reporting alleged Indian journalists, activists, lawyers and opposition figures appeared among potential targets. Following a petition, the Supreme Court will soon decide whether there should be an investigation into "India's alleged use of Pegasus spyware on journalists, activists and public officials".

The perpetrator has not been conclusively identified in those forensic reports, but NSO Group says Pegasus is licensed only to law enforcement and the intelligence agencies of sovereign states and government agencies.

The Indian government has denied wrongdoing, with IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw saying such surveillance was not possible under Indian law. The government later declined to file a detailed affidavit before the Supreme Court, citing national security.

These allegations sit within a wider pattern of democratic erosion in India. Critics have linked the Pegasus controversy to broader state practices, including:

- Frequent internet shutdowns and online censorship
- Legal pressure on journalists and activists
- Online harassment of journalists, activists and members of marginalised groups
- And the stifling of dissent.

In 2023, Apple warned at least 20 Indian opposition politicians and journalists that their iPhones may have been targeted by "state-sponsored attackers", reviving allegations the Indian government was using electronic surveillance against domestic critics. The Indian government has rejected the implication, but has announced an investigation.

Social media platforms have also been pressured by Indian government agencies and regulators to remove posts critical of the government. And supporters of the ruling party are known to organise online harassment campaigns of government critics.

A global problem

Other democracies – from Hungary to Turkey to Mexico – have experimented with spyware and aggressive online controls. Technologies once hailed as enabling protest, connecting citizens and amplifying marginalised voices are now being redeployed for surveillance.

In 2024, global internet freedom declined for the 14th consecutive year. This was driven by censorship, surveillance, disinformation, platform restrictions and controls on internet access. Governments of all types are blocking platforms, expanding monitoring, and deploying trolls and bots to tilt online debate.

Russia's state-linked online influence operations have used coordinated troll farms to manipulate political discussions at home and abroad. Turkey's pro-government "AKtroll" networks have also been accused of amplifying official narratives and harassing opposition voices online.

Gradual erosion of freedoms

Digital authoritarianism does not arrive overnight. It advances through normalisation: spyware licensed as "security", platforms nudged into silencing dissent, internet shutdowns excused as "temporary".

These measures, taken alone, may appear minor. Together, they gradually erode freedoms until democratic life itself is hollowed out. Reversing this requires democracies to commit to strict controls on spyware exports. Surveillance powers and online restrictions must be publicly justified and subject to independent review.

Equally vital is the protection of civil society. Journalists, activists and opposition groups need guarantees they can operate freely. —*The Conversation*

LETTERS

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SALAR ساہ

A year on, AI crash victim's dad rebuilds life: Kept promise after death

Nearly a year after the Ahmedabad plane crash snatched away his filmmaker son Mahesh Jirawala, who had promised to rebuild the family's life, 62-year-old Girdharbhai Kalawadia still struggles to accept the loss.

Yet, sitting inside the modest two-bedroom flat bought with compensation received after the tragedy, the grieving father says his son ultimately fulfilled that promise, even in death.

Today, Girdharbhai shares the flat in the Naroda area here with his wife, younger son Kartik and granddaughter, as the family makes a slow, fragile attempt to put life back on track after the tragedy. Still, Mahesh's absence continues to haunt them every day.

"We are trying to pick up the pieces. But how can parents forget their son? Every evening, I still feel he will return home," an emotional Girdharbhai told PTI ahead of the first anniversary of the June 12 tragedy.

"Mahesh always told me not to worry. After my heart surgery, he promised he would clear all our debts and buy a house for the family. Today, because of him, we are living in our own home. My son fulfilled his promise even after his death," the distraught father said.

Mahesh Kalawadia, also known as Mahesh Jirawala, was among the 260 persons killed when Air India flight AI-171 crashed into a medical hostel complex in Ahmedabad's Meghaninagar area shortly after take-off for London Gatwick last year.

Filmmaker Mahesh Jirawala, who was killed in the Air India plane crash in Ahmedabad on 12 June 2025 —@MAHESH_JIRAWALA/ INSTAGRAM

The 34-year-old filmmaker, who produced and directed Gujarati songs and albums, was among the 19 persons killed on the ground after the aircraft crashed and burst into flames near the road where he was passing by on his scooter while returning home.

Recalling the days before the tragedy, Girdharbhai said he had suffered a heart attack barely two weeks before the plane crash.

"I was a diamond worker at a polishing unit. After my surgery, I could no longer work. Mahesh told me to retire and rest at home. He said he would take responsibility for the family and buy our own house before Diwali," he said.

At the time, the six-member family - comprising Mahesh, his wife Hetal, his parents, younger brother Kartik and the latter's six-year-old daughter - lived in a rented house in Ahmedabad's Naroda area and was struggling with mounting debt.

Following Mahesh's death, the family received a collective compensation of Rs 1.29 crore from Air India, the Tata Group and the Gujarat government.

According to Girdharbhai, Mahesh's wife got Rs 54 lakh from the compensation amount and later moved to her parental home.

"Mahesh had got married just three months before the tragedy. Kartik had divorced earlier and now his daughter lives with us," he said.

From the remaining compensation amount, Girdharbhai said the family first repaid debts of nearly Rs 15 lakh.

"Then I bought this flat in the Naroda area for around Rs 45 lakh and fulfilled my son's wish. Around Rs 10 lakh was spent on furniture, while Rs 5 lakh was kept aside for my granddaughter," he said.

"Now nothing is left from that money, but I have peace that Mahesh ensured dignity for his family," he remarked.

His younger son has now opened a hair-cutting salon in the same residential complex in an effort to stabilise the family's finances.

"Kartik is slowly settling in his profession and we are hoping to get him remarried soon so that life can move forward," Girdharbhai said.

He remembered how Mahesh always prioritised the family's well-being and dreamt of giving his parents a secure life.

"Mahesh worried about everyone - his parents, brother and daughter. Whatever dignity we have today is because of him only," he added. —*PTI*

The 34-year-old filmmaker, who produced and directed Gujarati songs and albums, was among the 19 people killed on the ground after the aircraft crashed —PTI

Heat, humidity of monsoon could extend summer heat stress

Hot and humid conditions prevailing during India's monsoon season could extend the duration of uncompensable heat stress of the summer season under a global warming of 2 degrees Celsius, a study has found.

Findings published in the journal American Geophysical Union (AGU) Advances highlight a "surge of UHS (uncompensable heat stress) during the monsoon season (July-October) as the climate warms".

Researchers from the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Gandhinagar and the US' Stanford and Purdue universities said long-lasting uncompensable heat stress across both the seasons - summer and monsoon - could pose critical challenges to public health, labour productivity, and climate resilience in densely populated and vulnerable regions.

Uncompensable heat stress occurs when one's body is unable to cool down through sweating or other mechanisms due to extreme heat and humidity. A sustained accumulation of heat can endanger human health, including causing heat-related illness, organ failure and death.

The study shows that over the period of 1979-2021, uncompensable heat stress has become more frequent and is affecting significantly more areas across India - from less than 0.01 million square kilometres during the 1980s to 0.04 million square kilometres by 2020.

Uncompensable heat stress was found to be more prevalent during the summer months of March-June, affecting 8 per cent of India and more strongly associated with yearly heat-related mortality - only one per cent was found to be impacted during the monsoon season.

"However, the monsoon season (July-October) UHS, predominantly characterised by hot-humid conditions, is projected to increase rapidly with climate warming and affect nearly equivalent areas of the country as the summer season (60 per cent in summer and 53 per cent in the monsoon season) under 2 degrees Celsius warming relative to the preindustrial period," the authors wrote.

The total population affected by uncompensable heat stress could be between 0.8 and 1.2 billion, based on the projected population, under different warming levels, the team estimated.

Population and density data for the study period came from the Gridded Population of the World dataset, while heat-related mortality data for the Indian states during 1980-2019 was obtained from the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

Spatially, the uncompensable heat stress during summer primarily occurs in the Indo-Gangetic plain and coastal regions of India, potentially due to high temperatures and an inland moisture transport by pre-monsoon winds from the Bay of Bengal, among other factors.

In contrast, the researchers found that the monsoon season primarily experiences humid uncompensable heat stress within a narrower air temperature range between 35 degrees Celsius and 38 degrees Celsius.

The monsoon-season uncompensable heat stress has occurred in the Punjab state of northwestern parts of the country, the team said.

The presence of high humidity during the monsoon season combined with moderately high air temperatures, especially during the monsoon breaks, makes favourable conditions for extreme heat stress occurrence, they said.

The Gangetic Plain, northwestern India, and eastern coastal regions were identified as hotspots that experience uncompensable heat stress primarily during the summer season.

"However, northwestern and Gangetic plain regions will face more frequent occurrences of UHS during the monsoon than in summer under the warming climate," the authors said.

Red alert in 3 Kerala districts

The southwest monsoon remained active over Kerala on Monday, with the IMD issuing a red alert for three northern districts for the following day, officials said.

Two deaths were reported in Malappuram and Palakkad districts, while incidents of damage to buildings were reported from various parts of the state amid heavy rain and strong winds.

In Changaramkulam in Malappuram district, a 15-year-old boy died after falling into a water body while fishing on Monday morning, police said. The deceased is Murshid, son of Muhammed.

Police have registered a case of unnatural death.

In Kuzhalmannam in Palakkad district, a 30-year-old man died after a well caved in while he was cleaning it, police said. The deceased is Ramdas of Peringkunnam, who had been hired to clean the well. Though he was rushed to a hospital, he later succumbed to his injuries, police added.

According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), Kozhikode, Kannur and Kasaragod districts are likely to receive extremely heavy rainfall exceeding 20 cm within 24 hours on Tuesday.

Several tourist destinations across the state have been closed as a precaution in view of the forecast of heavy rainfall.

Waterlogging was reported from several parts of the state, including Kochi, Kannur and Thrissur. —*PTI*

Dust and debris outside a building in General Santos city on the island of Mindanao, Philippines on Monday —PTI

Nightmare in Philippines on 1st day of school

MANILA, 8 JUNE

Public schools had just reopened in the Philippines on Monday after the summer vacation from April to May, when the massive 7.8 earthquake hit.

Authorities were checking reports of some students being trapped in a two-storey school that collapsed in General Santos.

More than 100 students attending morning flag-raising ceremonies in his southern region sustained bruises and some fainted in panic.

The quake, the strongest in the country this year, was centered at sea off Mindanao, the second most populous island in the archipelago.

Many deaths were caused by falling debris, a damaged mosque and a landslide in the southern provinces of Sarangani.

Waves of 1 metre (3 feet) were generally monitored in the provinces of Sultan Kudarat and Sarangani. A 1.4-metre (4.6-foot) wave was monitored at one time in the coastal area of Kiamba town in Sarangani.

- The Philippines is one of the world's most disaster-prone nations

The quake was also felt in Malaysia's Sabah state on Borneo island. Sabah is just a boat ride away from southern Philippines. An 83cm tsunami reached off Indonesia's Sulawesi island.

Waves up to 20cm were detected on the remote Japanese island of Chichijima and the central Japanese town of Kushimoto.

Aftershocks as strong as 6.5 magnitude were recorded.

The Philippines, one of the world's most disaster-prone countries, is often hit by earthquakes and volcanic eruptions due to its location on the Pacific "Ring of Fire," an arc of seismic faults around the ocean.

The archipelago is also lashed by about 20 typhoons and tropical storms each year. —PTI

Rescuers inspect the damage after an earthquake in General Santos, Philippines, Monday —PTI

Iran blames US for strikes, says Israel didn't act alone

Trump says Israel wants ceasefire; Iran Prez open for talks

TEHRAN, 8 JUNE

Amid the possibility of renewed conflict, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on Monday said that Tehran remains committed to both defending its national interests and pursuing diplomatic engagement, emphasising that the country will not back down in the face of threats while also keeping the door open to negotiations.

"Our priority is national security and the peace of our people. We will defend the rights of the nation with authority and will not retreat in the face of any threat," he posted on X. "Diplomacy and defence are the two wings of national power; we have neither abandoned the field nor the negotiating table."

His comments come as residents in Tehran, which was also attacked by Israel, said they were bracing for a prolonged conflict.

"I think Iran did a good thing," said Reza Khorramgah, a 37-year-old Tehran resident. Iran attacked Israel in response to the strikes on Beirut's suburbs. "I think this war is going to continue for a long time, and we won't give up until victory."

Simultaneously, Iran blamed the United States for the escalation.

"No one believes that the Israeli regime would take any action without coordination with the US," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei told journalists in Tehran. "The US bears responsibility for the Israeli regime's aggression, and it will also be responsible for the consequences of any escalation in tensions."

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump attempted to sort the matter out on Truth Social amid a rift with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"Both sides, Israel and Iran, are looking to do an immediate ceasefire! Final negotiations on peace are proceeding, subject to ignorance or stupidity getting in its way," Trump posted. "Things should move quickly."

Officials from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Pakistan and Qatar have reportedly urged Trump to "reign in" Israel, sources said, as the Republican said that talks were ongoing.

Meanwhile, amid fears that West Asia could be dragged backed into the war, Saudi Arabia dismissed reports, largely from Iranian media, that its Prince Sultan Air Base was targeted. —Agencies

An Israeli strike on military centre in Iran's Tabriz on Monday. Iran said no casualties were reported here —X @IRNAENGLISH

WHO CALLS THE SHOTS?

"He (Netanyahu) won't have any choice. I call all the shots. He doesn't call the shots... The deal may make it on its own merit, or not, but this (renewed strikes) will not have any effect on it

—Donald Trump, US President

They are neither committed to a ceasefire nor believe in dialogue, and by demonstrating through the naval blockade and violation of agreements regarding Lebanon that they only understand the language of power

—Mohammad-Bagher Ghalibaf, Iran's Parliamentary Speaker

Tonight Tehran must burn!

—Itamar Ben-Gvir, Israeli National Security Minister

Israel kills 4 in southern Lebanon

BEIRUT, 8 JUNE

Israeli airstrikes and shelling continued in southern Lebanon on Monday, state-run National News Agency reported, with at least four people killed and several others wounded.

This comes a day after Israel struck Beirut's suburbs for the first time after the ceasefire with Lebanon.

One strike hit a shelter centre in Zefta, while others targeted the vicinity of a women's Husayniyya (Shiite congregation) camp, the public school junction and the town centre, NNA reported. The victims were identified as Adam Wahbi, his mother Khadija Hamzeh, Mohammad Al-Naanaa and Hussein Aqil.

Israeli warplanes also struck Ain Qana, Sharqiyeh, Yater and Safad Al-Battikh, while artillery shelling hit Nabatieh and Jabal Safi. Three airstrikes targeted the outskirts of Sajdafter prior artillery bombardment, NNA stated.

This comes as Lebanon's Army Chief General Rudolf Haykal left for Pakistan on Saturday to meet Field Marshal Asim Munir. Pakistan has been acting as a mediator. —Agencies

- The strikes come amid a renewed 'ceasefire' between Lebanon and Israel, which Hezbollah has rejected, and after the IDF bombed Beirut's suburbs, which Iran had warned could renew a full war

Israeli strikes hit a shelter centre and a Husayniyya (Muslim hall) in southern Lebanon's town of Zefta, on Monday —NNA

Israel closes key Gaza crossings

Israel on Sunday night announced the closure of crossings into Gaza following a spike in tensions with Iran. The Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) said the Kerem Shalom crossing, the main entry point for humanitarian aid into Gaza, and the Rafah Crossing, the key corridor between Israel and Egypt, will be closed until "further notice". The Israeli body claimed that there was subsequent humanitarian aid for Gaza.

Didn't promise no wars: Trump

During an NBC 'Meet the Press' interview that aired on Sunday, Trump said didn't he "guarantee no war" during his 2024 campaign where his slogan was "no new wars". "Why would I have built the strongest military in the world?" he added in the interview he stormed out of. Trump attempted to clarify: "I don't like these endless wars. This is not an endless war. We've been doing this for three months".

'Trump mulls buying Chagos islands'

The White House is reportedly considering a plan to buy the Chagos Islands after President Donald Trump slammed British Prime Minister Keir Starmer's for handing over the base to Mauritius. US officials have drawn up a proposal to bypass the UK and make their own deal to take control of Diego Garcia, a report by the Telegraph stated. "Diego Garcia's strategic location in the Indian Ocean makes it a vital and indispensable military installation," an official said.

Yemen's Houthis shut Red Sea for Israeli ships

ADEN, 8 JUNE

Yemen's the Houthi rebels announced a "total ban" on Israeli ships in the Red Sea, escalating the challenges of shipping in West Asia. This comes after the group said that they had also launched strikes on Israel.

The Houthis, part of Iran's 'Axis of Resistance' alongside Hamas and Hezbollah, had previously closed the Bab el-Mandeb Strait on the Arabian Peninsula between Yemen and the Horn of Africa, during Israel's genocide in Gaza. The move sent global oil prices flying. Analysts believe the move now could send prices even higher, given the de facto closure of the Strait of Hormuz between Iran and Oman.

Notably, Gulf countries have been rerouting their shipment through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait since the Iran war began.

Significant volumes of Saudi Arabia's crude have been transported by its East-West pipeline to its Red Sea export terminal at Yanbu.

The United Arab Emirates has also managed to export some crude from Fujairah, which lies outside the Strait of Hormuz, though there have been Iranian attacks on this terminal as well.

Houthi Spokesman Brigadier General Yahya Saree said that the Yemeni militants would not stand idly by in the face of the unjust siege imposed on its people and the people of Palestine, Iran, Lebanon, and Iraq. —Agencies

Exports via Bab el-Mandeb doubled amid Hormuz closure

Oil and product exports through the Bab el-Mandeb Strait nearly doubled to 7.2 million barrels per day in April compared with 3.9 million bpd in February before the US and Israel attacked Iran, according to data provided by Kpler. It accounts for nearly 12 per cent of the global seaborne oil trade.

WHO unveils $518M Ebola response plan for Congo

NEW DELHI, 8 JUNE

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has announced a $518 million Ebola preparedness and response plan for the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), covering June to November 2026. WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus emphasised the importance of political commitment, sustained funding, and community engagement to contain the outbreak. On X, he stated, "Containing Ebola depends on political commitment, sustained financing, and the trust and engagement of communities." —PTI

Armenian PM claims victory in polls testing Russia

YEREVAN, 8 JUNE

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan claimed victory in the general election after preliminary results showed his Civil Contract party securing 49.81 per cent of the vote. Calling the outcome a mandate for independence and democracy, Pashinyan reaffirmed closer ties with Europe. His main rival, Samvel Karapetyan, contested the election while under house arrest over alleged coup plans, which he denied. EU leaders congratulated Pashinyan as his party moved towards forming a parliamentary majority. —PTI

Xi meets Kim in North Korea, pledges 'unwavering' support

SEOUL, 8 JUNE

Chinese President Xi Jinping and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un underscored their commitment to deepen cooperation on Monday, as Xi made a rare visit to Pyongyang and pledged "unwavering support".

It's Xi's first visit to North Korea in seven years. He was given a lavish welcome upon arrival at Pyongyang's international airport. Xi and his wife Peng Liyuan were greeted by Kim and his wife Ri Sol Ju.

Xi expressed China's willingness to expand cooperation in a wide range of areas including trade, agriculture, construction and technology, state broadcaster CCTV said. Xi said the two countries should strengthen strategic cooperation and firmly safeguard their respective sovereignty and security interests.

"No matter how the international situation changes, the firm stance of the Chinese government in highly valuing the traditional friendship between China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will not change," Xi added.

Kim said Xi's visit "clearly demonstrates how unbreakable" their ties are.

Xi and Kim last met in Beijing in September, with Russian President Vladimir Putin and others. Xi also met US President Donald Trump and Putin last month. —PTI

Chinese President Xi Jinping with wife Peng Liyuan (left) and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un with his wife Ri Sol Ju (right) in Pyongyang, on Monday —KCNA

Nepal FM to visit China amid India row

KATHMANDU, 8 JUNE

Amid the border dispute with India, Nepal Foreign Minister Shishir Khanal will travel to China in from 15-16 June on an official visit, his secretariat said on Monday. This will be Khanal's first official visit to China after assuming the office.

During the visit, Khanal is expected to meet the chief of the International Department of the Communist Party of China Liu Haixing, besides holding bilateral meetings with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi. Khanal is also expected to hold an interaction with the Nepalese diaspora in China during the visit.

Khanal just concluded his three-day official visit to India, from 5 to 7 June, which he described as "fruitful", asserting that concrete steps were taken towards enhancing bilateral ties. —PTI

Keralam-born Raman closes in on LA Mayor post

WASHINGTON, 8 JUNE

Kerala-born Nithya Raman has risen to second place in the primary election for Los Angeles Mayor, surpassing reality TV star Spencer Pratt. Raman appears poised to face incumbent Karen Bass in the November runoff. Bass, aged 72, a former Democratic Congresswoman, leads with 34.7 per cent of the vote, according to the Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk's latest update.

The primary, held on 2 January, has seen 80 per cent of ballots counted so far. Raman, 44, has steadily gained ground, with 27.1 per cent of votes, overtaking Pratt by just over 3,000 votes. Pratt, a Republican, had been in second place initially but slipped to third, with 26.69 per cent.

Raman has served as a Los Angeles councillor since 2020, when she defeated incumbent David Ryu — a victory described as a "political earthquake" — and was re-elected in 2024. A candidate needs over 50 per cent to win outright; otherwise, the top two will contest the runoff.

Raman moved to Louisiana from India at age six, earning degrees from Harvard and MIT. —PTI

—SCREENGRAB

HUNDREDS INJURED

11 people killed in PoK protests; HRCP raises alarm

LAHORE, 8 JUNE

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) on Monday said that it is "deeply alarmed" by the ongoing violence in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), where 11 people, including four police officers, were killed and hundreds injured during violent clashes.

The HRCP also expressed serious concerns about the regional government's decision to proscribe the Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) under anti-terrorism legislation days ahead of the planned protests.

Clashes broke out after tensions flared over the death of a trader, who was allegedly shot during a confrontation with law enforcers on Friday night. Officials accused the demonstrators of attacking the Combined Military Hospital in Rawalakot on Sunday as clashes broke out between JAAC protesters and police. Authorities arrested over 100 people.

The HRCP condemned the use of excessive force, as well as communication blackouts.

The JAAC has long been demanding the abolition of 12 refugee seats in the Legislative Assembly in PoK. The seats are reserved for refugees from India's Kashmir who settled in Pakistan after 1947. JAAC alleges that these seats were used by mainstream Pakistani political parties to influence the formation of governments in Muzaffarabad. —PTI

PAKISTAN SECURITY FORCES KILL 27 MILITANTS IN NORTH WAZIRISTAN

PESHAWAR, 8 JUNE: Pakistan security forces have killed 27 militants linked to Fitna al-Khawarij in North Waziristan over the past 72 hours, the military said. The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) reported operations in Mir Ali and Miranshah, resulting in intense gunfights and the recovery of weapons. The militants were involved in terrorist activities and targeted killings. The operation also aimed to avenge the killing of Shaheed Malik Saifullah Dawar in Miranshah.

Rupee declines 56P to 95.74 against USD

MUMBAI, 8 JUNE

The rupee fell 56 paise to settle at 95.74 (provisional), influenced by rising crude oil prices and a stronger US dollar amid escalating geo-political tensions. Forex traders said the USD/INR pair erased previous gains on global risk aversion. The rupee opened at 95.35, touched an intraday high of 95.15, and closed lower. On Friday, it appreciated 56 paise after RBI measures to support forex liquidity. The dollar index was at 100.16, up 0.09 per cent. Brent crude surged 3.94 per cent to USD 96.76 per barrel following Iran's missile launches toward Israel. Experts expect the rupee to trade negatively, with the USD-INR range between 95.40 and 96.10. Indian equities declined, and forex surged by USD 938 million to USD 682.321 billion. *—PTI*

Gold drops ₹1,100, silver slides amid inflation fears

NEW DELHI, 8 JUNE

Gold prices declined Rs 1,100 to Rs 1.58 lakh per 10 grams, tracking global losses amid rising crude oil and inflation worries. Silver fell Rs 5,000 to Rs 2,55,700 per kg.

Analysts said the decline continues bullion's recent struggles as investors focus on inflation from higher energy prices rather than safe-haven appeal. Gaurav Garg from Lemonn Markets said, "Gold and silver prices declined on Monday amid rising concerns over inflation and interest rates, driven by stronger-than-expected US data, which has diminished their safe-haven appeal." Meanwhile, crude oil rose nearly 5 per cent to USD 97.44 per barrel after Iran's missile launches. Experts anticipate volatility before US inflation data and Federal Reserve updates, but gold remains a long-term inflation hedge. *—PTI*

Auto sales hit record high as EVs take over 11%

NEW DELHI, 8 JUNE

India's auto retail sales grew to a record 9.55 per cent to 25,31,067 units in May, with EV penetration exceeding 11 per cent for the first time. The rise followed last month's fuel price hikes amid the West Asia crisis. FADA noted, "The consumer response to fuel-price revisions was notable, with increased enquiries for fuel-efficient and alternative-powertrain options, raising two-wheeler EV share to 9.25 per cent from 6.11 per cent last year." Passenger vehicle sales hit a record 4,02,591 units, up 23.25 per cent. Two-wheelers reached 18,44,947 units, up 7.54 per cent, and commercial vehicles grew 5.29 per cent. FADA expects cautious optimism for June, supported by monsoon and rural demand, despite fuel pressures. *—PTI*

EU approves export on aquaculture, eggs, honey

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

The European Union has included India in the list of countries authorised to export aquaculture products, eggs, honey, and animal casings beyond September under its revised regulatory framework. The commerce ministry announced that the EU notified an amendment to Regulation (EU) 2021/405 due to concerns over antimicrobial resistance. The updated regulation will take effect from September 2026 and introduces additional requirements for countries exporting specified animal-origin products. India's inclusion ensures continued exports to the EU market beyond this date, which is vital for the fisheries sector, with exports valued at approximately USD 1.59 billion. The Department of Commerce has been engaging with the European Commission to meet their regulatory standards, while the Export Inspection Council has enhanced inspection, testing, and certification mechanisms to align with necessary EU regulations. *—PTI*

Investors lose ₹6.31 lakh cr as market slump extends

Triggered by heavy selling in global equities, surge in oil prices

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

Investors' wealth dropped Rs 6.31 lakh crore on Monday, mirroring a sharp decline in benchmark indices, due to a heavy sell-off in global equities and surging crude oil prices amid rising tensions in West Asia.

Extending losses for the second straight session, the 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 719.08 points, or 0.97 per cent, to settle at 73,524.26. During the day, it slumped 924.4 points, or 1.24 per cent, to 73,318.94.

While the 50-share NSE Nifty dropped 243.70 points, or 1.04 per cent, to end at 23,123.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies eroded by Rs 6,31,440.41 crore to Rs 4,55,28,758.96 crore (USD 4.76 trillion) in a single day.

"Global sentiment has weakened amid a flare-up of tensions in West Asia, pushing crude towards USD 100/bbl. Simultaneously, global technology stocks have witnessed a sell-off, as investors begin to question the sustainability of the Artificial Intelligence-led rally.

"Selling pressure was also seen in semiconductor-heavy indices, showing early signs of valuation fatigue and positioning unwind, although it is premature to classify this as a trend reversal," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Ltd, said.

Among the Sensex firms, Eternal, InterGlobe Aviation, Mahindra & Mahindra, Reliance Industries, Tata Consultancy Services, and Bajaj Finance were among the biggest laggards.

In contrast, Power Grid, Tech Mahindra, Bharat Electronics, and Bharti Airtel were among the winners.

"The sell-off was primarily triggered by a sharp correction in global equities and a spike in crude oil prices following renewed geopolitical tensions in West Asia.

Brent crude climbed above USD 96 per barrel after escalating hostilities involving Iran and Israel," Ajit Mishra, SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said. *—ANI*

Oil prices rise more than 4%

Global crude oil prices rose more than 4 per cent after Israel and Iran exchanged strikes, threatening a ceasefire. The renewed conflict raised fears of a prolonged closure of the critical Strait of Hormuz. This comes after oil prices fell on Friday on hopes of a US-Iran peace deal.

Brent crude futures rose by USD 4.42 or 4.47 per cent to USD 97.15 a barrel on Monday, while US crude futures were up by USD 4.07 or 4.50 per cent to USD 94.61 per barrel, according to Reuters. Iran fired missiles at Israeli targets on Sunday. Israel retaliated with strikes on Iran, including on a petrochemical plant, despite US President Donald Trump insisting that a peace deal is "very close."

AMID REGULATORY HEAT

Don't know where LIC's office is: Rajesh Exports

NEW DELHI, 8 JUN

With Rajesh Exports under regulatory pressure and LIC's exposure to the beleaguered gold jewellery firm under scrutiny, Chairman **Rajesh Mehta** has distanced himself from the insurer's investment decisions, arguing that retail shareholders stand to gain regardless of how the situation plays out.

On 3 June, SEBI issued an interim order against the Bengaluru-based gold jewellery manufacturer and refiner and its Chairman, Rajesh Mehta. The order alleges severe financial irregularities, wiping out Rs 15 lakh cr in shareholder wealth. scam

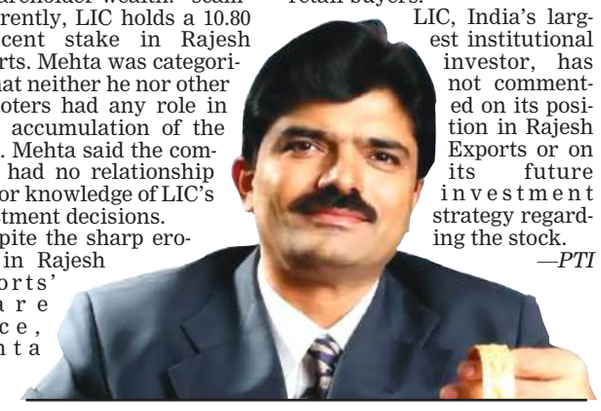
Currently, LIC holds a 10.80 per cent stake in Rajesh Exports. Mehta was categorical that neither he nor other promoters had any role in LIC's accumulation of the stock. Mehta said the company had no relationship with or knowledge of LIC's investment decisions.

Despite the sharp erosion in Rajesh Exports' share price, Mehta expressed confidence, based on his own assessment, that LIC had not yet slipped into the red on its position.

The stock of Rajesh Exports Ltd has tumbled over 14 per cent since 3 June, and hit a new lower circuit limit of Rs 94.50 on Monday.

"Even if LIC has lost money, who is the counter-gainer? If somebody loses, somebody has to gain. Who is the counterpart who has gained? It is the common Indian public," he said.

On whether a potential LIC exit could destabilise Rajesh Exports, Mehta was dismissive and once again said any sell-off is an opportunity for retail buyers.



LIC, India's largest institutional investor, has not commented on its position in Rajesh Exports or on its future investment strategy regarding the stock. *—PTI*

UK-based Haleon to build r2,000 cr plant in MP

BHOPAL, 8 JUNE

UK-based healthcare major Haleon will begin production for its Rs 2,000-crore manufacturing facility in Madhya Pradesh within two to three years, Chief Executive Officer for India, Kedar Lele, said.

Lele said Madhya Pradesh was chosen for its central location, skilled workforce, and industry-friendly policies. He added that the state government's transparent and pragmatic approach to industrial development was a key factor.

The announcement came just before MP Chief Minister Mohan Yadav virtually laid the foundation for the plant in Dhar district on Monday.

The project is expected to generate around 500 direct jobs, besides creating indirect employment opportunities through local suppliers and ancillary industries.

According to Lele, the manufacturing unit will support Haleon's growth in India, enhance domestic value addition and serve export markets across Asia.

Haleon's portfolio includes brands such as Sensodyne, Eno and Iodex. The company reported global revenue of 11 billion pounds in its latest annual financial report. *—PTI*

10-YEAR CONTRACT

Adani Ports secures Argentina's 1st LNG export

NEW DELHI, 8 JUNE

Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd (APSEZ) announced on Monday that it has secured a decade-long marine services contract supporting Argentina's first Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) export project.

This marks APSEZ's entry into South America and expands its international marine services portfolio. The contract was awarded to APSEZ's subsidiary, Adani Harbour International FZCO, through a consortium with Argentina's Meridian Group, following a competitive global tender by Southern Energy SA (SESA).

The agreement covers comprehensive marine services, including tugboat operations for LNG carriers, offshore logistics, supply support, and crew transfer services, supported by four high-spec tugboats, an anchor handling vessel, and a crew boat. Ashwani Gupta, APSEZ's CEO, said, "With marine operations in 12 countries and a growing fleet, we bring operational expertise to complex maritime environments."

He added that Argentina is emerging as a major LNG supplier, with exports of up to 10 million tonnes annually to India from 2027. The Southern Energy FLNG project, developed by SESA, is located in Argentina's San Matias Gulf and will liquefy natural gas from the General San Martin pipeline aboard the Hilli Episeyo vessel, with operations starting in September 2027.

The first phase aims to produce 2.45 MT of LNG annually, making it Argentina's first operational LNG export project. *—PTI*

AI INFRA RACE WILL HINGE ON ENERGY, EDGE: WEF

NEW DELHI, 8 JUNE

Over the next three to five years, the AI infrastructure battle will shift from scaling up Graphic Processing Units (GPUs) to managing distributed inference, energy constraints, and scale resilience, said the World Economic Forum (WEF) report.

WEF said success will depend on securing energy and cooling, building interoperable data systems, and investing in large-scale AI training and edge inference.

For India, that means expanding compute and storage while prioritising energy efficiency, edge deployment, and privacy-by-design to stay adaptable as technology and regulations evolve.

The report said AI applications are moving from pilots to everyday use, driving inference demand that far outpaces training. This is pushing compute closer to users and sensitive data, accelerating edge and on-device deployments for real-time needs such as autonomous systems and smart cities, as well as regulatory compliance.

The implication: future infrastructure spending will tilt toward regional data centres, edge nodes and on-device chips, not just hyperscale clouds.. *—ANI*

-AI-GENERATED IMAGE

SpiceJet to add 3 Airbus planes in July

MUMBAI, 8 JUNE

Domestic carrier SpiceJet on Monday said it plans to induct three Airbus A320 planes on a damp lease next month.

The company has already finalised a lease agreement for these three planes, SpiceJet said in a statement.

Along with this, SpiceJet said it has also ungrounded a Boeing 737 MAX aircraft for commercial operations.

"These aircraft will help us meet growing passenger demand, strengthen operational resilience and enhance network flexibility during a busy travel period," said Debojo Maharshi, Chief Business Officer, SpiceJet.

The airline, he said, continues to focus on steadily expanding its fleet and improving operational readiness moving forward. *—PTI*

Vedanta rebrands copper and Nickel units

NEW DELHI, 8 JUNE

Vedanta Ltd announced on Monday the rebranding of its copper and nickel businesses as Vedanta Copper and Vedanta Nickel, respectively.

The move is part of Vedanta's strategy to create sector-specific identities, with all copper operations unified under Vedanta Copper.

VCI will operate internationally at Fujairah and Saudi Arabia. Vedanta Nickel, renamed as Vedanta Nickel, aims to develop a domestic nickel ecosystem to support India's demand for critical minerals. Both brands will be rolled out gradually while continuing under Vedanta Ltd.

Puneet Khurana, CEO of Vedanta Copper and Nickel, said, "We are creating stronger, sector-focused platforms that better serve market needs." *—PTI*

TCS bags multimillion-euro AI deal from Canada Life

LONDON, 3 JUNE

IT services major Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) has secured a multimillion-euro deal from global life and pensions insurer Canada Life for IT infrastructure across Europe. TCS did not disclose the contract's financial value.

Under the multiyear agreement, TCS will work to modernise and manage Canada Life's data centres, core infrastructure, end-user computing, and software lifecycle management, the company said on Monday.

As part of the partnership, TCS said it will expand its talent pool across infrastructure services in the UK, Ireland, the Isle of Man, and Germany, and invest in new learning, certification, and career development opportunities in these regions.

By leveraging our deep domain expertise, we will support Canada Life's long-term growth, said Vinay Singhvi, Head, UK & Ireland, Tata Consultancy Services *—PTI*

DRIVEN BY SERVICE SECTOR

India posts $7.1 billion current account surplus

NEW DELHI, 8 JUNE

India recorded a current account surplus of USD 7.1 billion, or 0.7 per cent of GDP, in the January-March (Q4) quarter of 2025-26 (FY26), helped by services exports and higher remittances, according to Reserve Bank of India data released on Monday.

The surplus was USD 13.7 billion or 1.4 per cent of GDP in Q4 FY 25.

However, for the entire fiscal FY26, the current account deficit stood at USD 25.2 billion or 0.6 per cent of GDP compared to USD 22.9 billion or 0.6 per cent of GDP in FY25.

While the merchandise trade deficit at USD 83.4 billion in Q4 2025-26 was higher than USD 59.3 billion in the year-ago quarter, net services receipts increased to USD 60.4 billion from USD 53.3 billion.

Services exports increased on a year-on-year basis in major categories, such as computer services and other business services, according to RBI data for Q4 FY26.

Personal transfer receipts under the secondary income account, mainly representing remittances by Indians employed overseas, rose to USD 43.5 billion in Q4 FY26 from USD 33.9 billion.

In the financial account also, foreign direct investment (FDI) recorded a net inflow of USD 4.2 billion in Q4 2025-26, higher than USD 0.4 billion in the year-ago period.

Foreign portfolio investment (FPI) invested a net of USD 12 billion in the final quarter of 2025-26 against the outflow of USD 5.9 billion a year earlier, the RBI said.

Net outgo on the primary income account, mainly reflecting payments of investment income, decreased to USD 11.1 billion in the fourth quarter from USD 11.9 billion in the January-March period of 2024-25.

The RBI further said that NRI deposits recorded a net inflow of USD 3.3 billion to USD 2.8 billion in Q4 FY25.

Net invisible receipts comprise services, primary income and secondary income accounts. *—PTI*

Apple expected to unveil new AI features

CALIFORNIA, 8 JUNE

Apple is expected to unveil new artificial intelligence features at its annual Worldwide Developers Conference beginning Monday — the last such conference before CEO Tim Cook hands over to John Ternus in September.

Analysts expect the iPhone maker to give updates on new AI features and capabilities, including developments with its Siri voice assistant.

Apple has been playing catch-up on AI with its Big Tech peers. It currently uses Google's Gemini AI model to help power its AI features.

Emarketer senior analyst Gadjo Sevilla said he expects Siri to be reimagined as a conversational AI chatbot with memory of past interactions and the ability to handle multiple tasks in a single request.

Cook announced his retirement in April, ending a 15-year run that saw the company. The CEO transition comes at a critical moment for Apple.

AI has driven the industry's biggest shift since the iPhone's 2007 debut, but Apple has struggled to deliver its artificial intelligence features it promised nearly two years ago. *—PTI*

FIFA WORLD CUP 2026

104 matches, 48 teams and 3 countries make this largest ever

NEW JERSEY, 8 JUNE

This year's edition of the This year's edition of the World Cup will be the biggest ever with an expanded field of 48 teams, three host countries and 16 stadiums staging the record 104 matches over the 39-day tournament.

The tournament being held in the United States, Canada, and Mexico is the first since FIFA expanded the field from 32 teams to 48, adding four more groups in the initial stage and a new round of 32 in the knockout portion.

The World Cup was expanded for the 1998 tournament, with the last seven editions featuring 32 teams and 64 games. This also marks just the second time that the tournament will be played in multiple countries, with Japan and South Korea sharing the 2002 edition. There will be 11 sites in the United States, with three in Mexico and two in Canada. Mexico will host 13 matches, including the opener in Mexico City on June 11 between the host team and South Africa and three in the knockout rounds. Canada will also have 13 matches, with the first coming between the hosts and Bosnia-Herzegovina on June 12 in Toronto and three more in the knockout round.

The remaining 78 will be in the U.S. starting when the Americans take on Paraguay on June 12 in the Los Angeles area, and including all the matches in the quarterfinals, semifinals and the final round at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey. Here's a look at some other stats to watch during the 2026 World Cup:

1,248: There are a record 1,248 players on the rosters coming from 449 domestic clubs in 71 countries. There are 357 players with World Cup experience, along with 891 first-timers.

England leads the way with 200 players on rosters who are based there at the club level. Germany is second with 109. —*PTI*

- FIFA World Cup is jointly hosted by United States, Canada, and Mexico. The opener is on 11 June

Perez was re-elected Real Madrid president

BARCELONA, 8 JUNE

Florentino Perez has earned four more years as Real Madrid's president after winning club elections on Sunday night.

"We are going to keep working so that Real Madrid keeps winning more titles," he told his supporters at a late-night victory party soon after Real Madrid's club television channel reported Pérez had beaten challenger Enrique Riquelme.

The club is yet to make the vote count public.

Pérez's victory will pave the way for him to bring back Portuguese coach José Mourinho for a second stint at Madrid. —*PTI*

BEST STAR PLAYERS TO WATCH AT THE WORLD CUP 2026

Lamine Yamal (Spain)
Yamal may be only 18 years old, but the winger, easily the best of his generation, shows maturity far beyond his years.

After playing a key role in guiding Spain to the Euro 2024 title, Yamal heads to his maiden World Cup, with fans and critics eager to see which new tricks he will pull out of his hat.

Kylian Mbappe (France)
The 2022 World Cup was bittersweet for Mbappe, who narrowly missed out on the title despite scoring a sensational hat-trick in the final, which was eventually decided on penalties.

Yet there was a silver lining to the campaign. Mbappe won the Golden Boot as the tournament's top scorer, serving opponents another reminder of his devastating attacking calibre.

Erling Haaland (Norway)
One of the most lethal strikers in European football, Norway's Haaland, will make his World Cup debut this summer.

Leading Norway's promising "golden generation", Haaland was the standout performer in UEFA qualifying, finishing as the top scorer with 16 goals – more than double the tally of his nearest challengers.

Cristiano Ronaldo (Portugal)
The 2026 World Cup could be Ronaldo's last dance.

At 41, the forward is in the twilight of his career, though he continues to defy age with his remarkable fitness levels.

Having guided Portugal to continental glory, Ronaldo will hope to finally replicate that success on the global stage as he chases his maiden World Cup title.

Harry Kane (England)
Fresh off the high of lifting his second Bundesliga title with Bayern Munich, striker Kane heads to the World Cup in some of the best form of his career.

After finishing as the league's top scorer in consecutive campaigns, the England captain will bring sublime attacking firepower to the Three Lions, one of the pre-tournament favourites.

Vinicius Jr (Brazil)
What a difference four years can make is best reflected in Vinicius Jr's remarkable journey. At the 2022 World Cup, he had only just broken into the side. Now, Vinicius arrives as one of the biggest stars in world football. As Brazil attempt to rediscover their title-winning pedigree, Vinicius – known for his pace, dribbling and technique will be at the forefront of the Selecao's star-studded attack, which also features all-time leading scorer Neymar Jr, a surprise inclusion in their squad. —*PTI*

Antoine Semenyo (Ghana)
After joining Manchester City at the beginning of the year, winger Semenyo has quickly impressed with his playmaking ability. While his 10 goals played a crucial role in City's title challenge, the 26-year-old will remember the season fondly for his remarkable back-heel finish, which handed the club its eighth FA Cup trophy.

At the World Cup, Semenyo could build on that form and even emerge as the poster boy of the Ghana team, stepping up in the absence of injured midfielder Mohammed Kudus.

Mohamed Salah (Egypt)
One of the greatest icons of African football, Salah has broken countless individual records and won almost every major club honour, but the 33-year-old has yet to lift a title with his nation.

A muscle injury threatened to derail his World Cup campaign, but fans will be relieved to know the "Egyptian King" will be leading their charge in North America, as he looks to complete unfinished business in presumably his final act on the global stage. —*PTI*

The 2026 FIFA World Cup final will be played at the gigantic 82,500-seat MetLife Stadium in New Jersey -x/*FIFAWORLDCUP*

Rahi on top, Manu second in women's 25m pistol T4 finals

DEHRADUN, 8 JUNE

Former Asian Games champion Rahi Sarnobat produced a commanding performance to win the women's 25m pistol finals, outwitting double Olympic-medallist Manu Bhaker in the National Selection Trials 4 being organised to finalise India's Asian Games shooting squad here on Monday. Rahi, an Olympian, looked in control throughout the final and finished with 37 hits to comfortably take the top spot. Bhaker settled for silver with 35 hits, while Karnataka's Divya TS claimed bronze with 29 hits. Tamil Nadu's Niveditha V Nair finished fourth with 24 hits, while Olympian Rhythm Sangwan was fifth with 22 hits. Punjab's Arshdeep Kaur finished sixth with 18 hits, stated a press release from the National Rifles Association of India (NRAI).—*PTI*

Indian team will begin AG build-up at Archery World

ANTALYA, 8 JUNE

India will begin its preparations for the upcoming Asian Games with a completely revamped squad taking the field at the Archery World Cup Stage 3 beginning here on Tuesday. The biggest talking point is the absence of star archer Deepika Kumari from the recurve women's team event, barely a month after she spearheaded India's stunning World Cup gold medal triumph in Shanghai, where the team upset Olympic champions South Korea and hosts China en route to the title. Following the Shanghai World Cup, the Archery Association of India (AAI) conducted selection trials for World Cup Stages 3 and 4 as well as the Asian Games. With only three archers allowed per category at the Asian Games, Deepika and Atanu finished fourth in their respective trials.—*PTI*

India registers historic win over AFG

Suthar shines to put Jadeja under pressure

MULLANPUR, 8 JUNE

Left-armer Manav Suthar's emergence as the flag-bearer of India's spin attack in the foreseeable future was the biggest gain for the hosts in their expectedly dominant innings and 300 runs historic victory over Afghanistan in the one-off Test in Mullanpur on Monday. Manav Suthar shines to put Jadeja under pressure.

After being bowled out for 152 in the first innings, courtesy a 6/33 from Suthar, Afghanistan fared much worse in the second essay, getting bundled out for 112 in 35.5 overs, midway into the third day, to hand India their biggest innings win. Washington Sundar (4/36) did the star turn in the second innings while Kuldeep Yadav (3/30) also helped himself to some easy pickings.

In 2018, India had thrashed the Afghans by an innings and 260 runs, but the visitors would take solace that they could stretch this Test into the third day.

The match belonged to Suthar, a left-arm orthodox spinner from Rajasthan's Sri Ganganagar.

He became the 10th Indian bowler to take a five-for on debut with his overall haul of seven wickets (6/33 and 1/29), but more importantly, he answered the lingering question in the country's cricketing ecosystem: "Who will take over the baton from Ravindra Jadeja as and when he calls time?"

India 564 for 8 dec (Gill 126, Rahul 100, Saleem 6-140) beat Afghanistan 152 (Rahmat 60, Suthar 6-33, Prasidh 3-37) and 112 (Atal 42, Sundar 4-36, Kuldeep 3-30) by an innings and 300 runs. —*PTI*

India's players pose for photographs with the match trophy after winning the Test cricket match between India and Afghanistan, in Mullanpur -*PTI*

VAIBHAV IN FOCUS AS INDIA A TAKES ON SRI LANKA

DAMBULLA, 8 JUNE

India's teenage batting prodigy Vaibhav Sooryavanshi will be the centre of attention in the one-day 'A' tri-series beginning here on Tuesday, as the 15-year-old edges closer to a potential senior national team debut during India's tour of Ireland later this month.

Sooryavanshi has made his way to the world-dominating Indian T20I side, which has won the last two T20 World Cups.

His addition makes the three-time winners stronger.But for now, the left-handed batter threatens to challenge the best of the bowlers in the 50-overs format, with Sri Lanka and Afghanistan bracing for the wonder kid who has caught the eye of the cricket fraternity.

Before he embarks on the tours of Ireland and England with the national team, it will be interesting to see how adept Sooryavanshi is in changing gears when it comes to moving from demolishing world-class bowlers in the IPL to batting on spin-friendly wickets in the longer white-ball format here in the island nation. Sooryavanshi was seen defending a few balls in the nets sessions here. —*PTI*

LOSES GAME TO GM

TN CM honours chess champion Pragg with ₹ 50 lakh

CHENNAI, 8 JUNE

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay on Monday honoured Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa with Rs 50 lakh and tried his hand at a game with the 20-year-old city player at the Secretariat here, only to be checkmated by the youngster.

The chief minister felicitated Praggnanandhaa, who became the first Indian to win the prestigious Norway Chess title with a final round victory over Germany's Vincent Keymer in Oslo. He also played a game of chess with the young Grandmaster in his chamber in the Secretariat.

As Vijay, completely absorbed in the game, stood up beside his huge office table to make a strategic move to defend his king, Praggnanandhaa, the latter's parents, state Public Works and Sports Development Minister Aadhav Arjuna, and member secretary of the Sports Development Authority of Tamil Nadu J Meghanatha Reddy, stood around watching. The final move by Praggnanadhaa showed Vijay's king being checkmated. The CM put up a smile and applauded his 'opponent'. Soon, the onlookers too smiled and applauded as a beaming Praggnanandhaa looked at the CM, as seen in the video.

Later, Vijay presented a cheque for Rs 50 lakh as a cash incentive on behalf of SDAT to the young grandmaster for etching his name in history.

"I didn't expect the chief minister to play chess; he played well. We played for about 15 minutes, and I won," Praggnanandhaa told reporters. —*PTI*

ATP Rankings: Zverev remains 3rd, Cobolli makes Top 10 debut

ROME, 8 JUNE

Newly-crowned French Open champion Alexander Zverev remained third while runner-up Flavio Cobolli made his Top 10 debut in the latest ATP Rankings released on Monday.

In Sunday's Roland Garros final, Germany's Zverev took down Italy's Cobolli 6-1, 4-6, 6-4, 6-7(5), 6-1 to clinch his maiden Major.

Cobolli, who played in a Grand Slam final for the first time in his career, gained four places to enter the Top 10.

Jannik Sinner, who suffered a shock second-round loss against Juan Manuel Cerundolo, and Carlos Alcaraz, the winner of the previous two editions who missed this year's tournament due to a wrist injury, continued to occupy the No. 1 and No. 2 positions, respectively.

Novak Djokovic, a three-time French Open winner, slipped three places to No. 7 after he squandered a two-sets-to-love lead in his third-round defeat against Joao Fonseca. The Brazilian youngster, who lost in the quarterfinals, moved up five spots to No. 25.

Djokovic and No. 8 Daniil Medvedev both have the same number of ranking points, but the Russian is ranked lower than the Serbian due to tie-breaker criteria. —*Agencies*

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

SINDHU EYES TITLE BREAKTHROUGH, AYUSH LEADS MEN'S CHALLENGE

SYDNEY, 8 JUNE

Two-time Olympic-medallist PV Sindhu will look to end a prolonged title drought, while rising star Ayush Shetty will spearhead India's men's singles campaign at the Australian Open Super 500 badminton tournament beginning here on Tuesday.

Sindhu, seeded third, enters the tournament with a favourable draw as she searches for her first BWF World Tour title since winning the Syed Modi International in 2024.

The former world champion's best result this season remains a semifinal finish at the Malaysia Open in January.

The 30-year-old will open against Peru's Ines Lucia Castillo and is likely to face the winner of the first-round clash between fellow Indian Isharani Barua and China's Han Qian Xi.

Sindhu comes into the event after a round-of-16 finish at the Indonesia Open, where she lost to Paris Olympics champion and old nemesis and world No.1 An Se-young of South Korea.

If she progresses as expected, Sindhu could run into Japan's world No.3 Akane Yamaguchi in the semifinals.

The Indian enjoys a slender 15-13 head-to-head advantage over the Japanese star. A potential final could pit her against the second seed and world No. 8 Pornpawee Chochuwong of Thailand. —*PTI*